



# EUR/ACE Emerging Donor Challenge Program (EDCP) Evaluation Report

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

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ABR	Annual Budget Review
ACE	Assistance Coordinator for Europe and Eurasia
AMO	Association for International Affairs
APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
BDI	Bulgarian Diplomatic Institute
BFSA	Bulgarian Food Safety Agency
BMSB	Brown Marmorated Stink Bug
CDCS	Country Development and Cooperation Strategy
CDD	Community-Driven Development
CE	Central Europe
CISTA	Central Institute for Supervising and Testing in Agriculture
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DCHA	Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance
DCM	Deputy Chief of Mission
DFID	Department for International Development
E&E	USAID Bureau for Europe and Eurasia
E3	Bureau for Economic Growth, Education and Environment
EaP	Eastern Partnership
ECEAP	Estonian Center of Eastern Partnership
EDCP	Emerging Donors Challenge Program
EUR	State Department's Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs
EU	European Union
EUR/ACE	Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia
FO	Front Office
FSN	Foreign Service National
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
GOR	Grant Officer Representative
ICLA	Local Authorities Information Center
ICS	Integrated Country Strategy
IPPS	International Plant Protection Convention
JRS	Joint Regional Strategy
LAG	Local Action Groups
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDF	Media Development Fund
MEPA	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture
MERP	Municipal Energy Reform Program
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
MRL	Maximum Residue Limits
NFA	National Food Agency
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAS	Public Affairs Section

POC	Point of Contact
PIN	People in Need
PSF	Polish Solidarity Fund
SFPA	Slovak Foreign Policy Association
SME	Subject Matter Expert
SOE	State-Owned Enterprise
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
UCMC	Ukrainian Crisis Media Center
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WTO	World Trade Organization

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## Executive Summary

From June 2018 through the end of February 2019, qualitative performance data was collected for an evaluation of a representative sample of grants awarded from 2016-2018 under the Emerging Donor Challenge Program (EDCP). EDCP provides for trilateral assistance projects that are co-funded by the U.S. and the emerging donors of Central Europe and the Baltics to transfer their knowledge and experience of the transition to democracy and markets to countries that are still receiving assistance in Southeastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The U.S. contribution ranged from \$49,000 to \$500,000 per project. The independent internal evaluation team was led by the Senior Program Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist embedded in the Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia (EUR/ACE) and included US Agency for International Development (USAID) experts in media/disinformation, energy, and governance; and a US Department of Agriculture (USDA) team member expert in agriculture and trade with the European Union (EU). The purpose of the evaluation was to answer five questions about the effectiveness and management burden of the program for the purpose of advising EUR/ACE about whether it should be continued and, if so, to determine whether any improvements were needed to the program. The team evaluated a sample of the projects in 2016-2018 in media/disinformation, energy, local governance, agricultural trade, and EU Partnership in Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Latvian training for Central Asians. Findings are summarized below:

- EDCP built strong relationships between the emerging donors and the beneficiary countries that will be sustained and scaled up in some cases.
- Emerging donors received many benefits from their participation in EDCP, which gave them the reputation and confidence to manage larger, longer term projects.
- Technical quality of the technical assistance and/or training was a weakness in most cases, however, and in the sample of projects evaluated, the team did not find evidence aside from the Ukraine energy cooperation with Slovakia that emerging donor transition experience is being transferred to and absorbed by the recipient country.<sup>1</sup>
- EDCP process for the planning, vetting, selection and processing of awards is excessively complex and management intensive for the size of the funds involved, and several options for other processes are suggested.

The team's overall recommendation is that EUR/ACE should continue EDCP in a redesigned fashion above the \$1 million/year level with emphasis on governance, media/disinformation, energy and EU partnership; with a clearer process for the co-creation of project designs between the United States and the emerging donors, streamlined management, increased involvement with qualified technical grant monitors, and more engagement between the U.S. grant managers and the emerging donors. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) in Latvia, the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia have all expressed appreciation for the increase in aid effectiveness that EDCP has resourced for their countries. Estonia, Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic are committed to

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<sup>1</sup> Reporting from posts on EDCP could be analyzed to see if there is additional evidence to apply to answering this question, but that is beyond the scope of the present evaluation.

sustaining support for institutions, initiatives and relationships in assisted countries that were started under EDCP.

## Introduction to the Purpose of the Evaluation

In June 2018, the State Department's Bureau for Europe and Eurasian Affairs, Office of the Assistance Coordinator to Europe and Eurasia (EUR/ACE) initiated an internal independent evaluation of a representative set of grants that had been funded under the Emerging Donor Challenge Program (EDCP). The purpose of EDCP was to engage in trilateral projects that would be co-funded by the U.S. and emerging donors, which are the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltics that had graduated from assistance and become EU members since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, in order to transfer their knowledge and experience of the transition to democracy and market economy to beneficiary countries that are still receiving donor assistance with their transitions. The evaluation is a meta-evaluation designed to inform EUR/ACE about the strengths and weakness of the design of the EDCP program, its ability to achieve results as demonstrated by a representation sample of grants awarded and implemented, and to obtain recommendations on whether the program should be continued and, if so, how it could be improved.

## Evaluation Methodology

Over the 6-year period of EDCP's existence at the time of the evaluation, 73 grants had been awarded in a wide range of theme areas. The EUR/ACE Senior Program Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist Dr. Deborah Prindle was asked to serve as team leader, and it was agreed that she would recruit a set of U.S. government team members who had the relevant sector expertise in the theme areas of the grants to be evaluated. The EUR/ACE Program Manager for EDCP, Dianna Palequin, selected the sample of grants that the team would evaluate based on EUR/ACE's desire for the team to look at the results of grants given for project co-funded with several different emerging donors, in the main beneficiary countries, over the major theme areas that had been targeted by EDCP over the previous three years of 2016-2018, and which had either been completed or were still on-going. The grant sample included the following:

- Energy: Three grants in Ukraine for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects matched by Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia.
- Media: Two grants in Ukraine for media independence and countering disinformation projects matched by Estonia and the Czech Republic.
- Governance: A series of grants for local government projects matched by Poland, a grant matched by Slovakia, and a grant matched by Bulgaria in Moldova.
- Agriculture: Grants in Georgia for two agricultural export projects matched by Bulgaria and the Czech Republic.
- EU Partnership: Fellowships for Central Asians to study in Latvia in a special 6-week program at the Riga Graduate School of Law on how to work with the European Union (EU) and promote human rights and economic reform.

The evaluation activities took place over a week in each of the four countries. The team's agenda in each country was proposed by the post and cleared in advance with the relevant team members. For activities that were already completed, the agenda included the opportunity to conduct key informant interviews and/or focus groups with the following types of people for each activity evaluated:

- Grant Officer Representative (GOR) and Grant Officer (GO)
- Emerging Donor Representative in the relevant Embassy in the assisted country (and at times, via telcon, those back in the Emerging Donor country)
- Implementers if still in country
- A sample of the relevant types of Assistance Beneficiaries (e.g. people trained, participants sent on study tours, representatives of government involved in or targeted for the assistance delivered, etc.)

For activities that were still on-going, in addition to the types of key informant interviews and focus groups listed above, the team directly observed the in-process delivery of the assistance including:

- Training events
- Site visits to inspect infrastructure and equipment funded other products such as manuals produced by the projects including their sub-grants. To the extent feasible, for activities undertaken in multiple regions of the country, the team conducted site visits in a representative sample of the range of regional contexts (variation by urban and rural, ethnicity, environmental conditions, or economic opportunities, etc.)

Beneficiaries were interviewed without the presence of the implementers to ensure that they could provide their feedback in an unbiased context. For logistical support reasons, the GOR was present during the media interviews in Odessa and some other regional energy efficiency site visits in Ukraine, but unless asked to provide interpreter services in a few instances, she observed but did not participate in the interviews or focus groups.

### **Team Composition**

Based on the sectors in this sample of grants, the team leader EUR/ACE Senior Program Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist Dr. Deborah Prindle recruited the following U.S. government subject matter experts, who were independent of any link to EDCP, as team members:

- Michael Keshishian, USAID/DCHA, Local Governance Expert
- Jay Mitchell, Director for Trade, Europe, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) International Services
- Olesia Gardner, USAID/E&E, Media and Disinformation Expert
- Simone Lawaetz, USAID/E3, Energy Expert

## Evaluation Questions

The evaluation was designed to answer the following five questions:

1. To what extent are enduring relationships forged between the emerging donor country and the assisted one as a result of this mode of assistance?
2. To what extent is the technical quality of the assistance provided at least equivalent to that which would be provided if it were fully funded by the U.S. government?
3. To what extent is the management burden on Embassy staff worth the effort, and could that be lessened with different procedures?
4. To what extent does participating in this program strengthen the emerging donor's technical capacity to be a donor (even though this was not an explicit objective of the program, as ACE did not make available across the board technical assistance on development processes, etc.)?<sup>2</sup>
5. To what extent is the assistance better absorbed and/or targeted because it is delivered by partnership with an emerging donor that has already been through the same process of reform and democracy-building?

The questions were answered by having the team leader and relevant subject matter experts (SMEs) review background documents on the grants and then conduct key informant interviews in the field of a cross-section of grantee personnel, emerging donors' Embassy staff, U.S. Embassy leadership, U.S. government Grant Officers and Grant Officer Representatives (GORs), beneficiaries, assisted government agencies, local implementing partners, and other stakeholders. For grants that still have on-going activities, the fieldwork was timed to the extent possible to allow the team members to observe grant activities in person. The team relied on each post involved in the fieldwork and its GORs and grantees to identify the people to be interviewed and the agenda of interviews and field activities that could be observed directly. In reviewing the draft agendas proposed by the posts, the team in some cases asked for additional interviewees to be added to the agenda. The team is particularly grateful to Dianna Palequin, Christine Tefft, Kristi Law, and Nicole Hollinshead in EUR/ACE; Yadviha Hetun in Ukraine; Teresa Hawkins in Moldova; Mackenzie Rowe in Georgia; and the excellent Administration of the Riga Graduate School of Law in Latvia for their support for the planning and implementation of the evaluation fieldwork. The evaluation methodology also tested a lower cost method of internal independent evaluation, by using internal independent U.S. experts who were employed by or embedded in the U.S. government, and whose offices were willing to release them for a few days to travel to participate in this effort, so that the cost of the evaluation to EUR/ACE was only the cost of invitational travel funds.

After the field work was completed at the end of September 2018, EUR/ACE expanded the scope of the evaluation to include having the team leader and the EDCP Program Manager identify key informants in the leadership of the emerging donors' Ministries of Foreign Affairs who would be willing to be interviewed about their experience with EDCP and the ways they currently plan and manage their foreign aid programs. From December 2018 until the end of February 2019 these points of contact were identified with the assistance of their embassies in Washington and the

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<sup>2</sup> Strengthening donors' program impact and sustainability by scaling up the resources applied to a given Emerging Donor initiative was an explicit goal of the program.

beneficiary countries, and the interviews were scheduled and implemented by the team leader and the new EDCP Program Manager Kristi Law.

Detailed sector-specific findings, conclusions and recommendations by the SMEs on the team are presented in Attachments 2-5 to this report. This main report summarizes the cross-cutting findings, conclusions and recommendations for each of the evaluation questions, drawing upon both the field observations and interviews, as well as the information collected from the phone interviews of the emerging donors.

### **1. To what extent are enduring relationships forged between the emerging donor country and the assisted one as a result of this mode of assistance?**

#### **Findings:**

A number of the projects evaluated resulted in an enduring relationship between the emerging donor and the beneficiary country. A prime example is the relationship between Poland and Moldova in assistance to local governments. The Polish Solidarity Fund (PSF) had to register in Moldova as a pre-condition for its first grant from EDCP to work with local governments. Due to its inexperience with the country registration process, USAID at the time provided mentoring and much guidance and support for that process. Now that PSF has implemented a series of three EDCP grants that involved the creation of a Local Authorities Information Center, and a mechanism for awarding sub-grants to local governments for multi-city investments, the government of Poland has been persuaded that establishing a beneficiary country field office is an important part of a long-term assistance commitment. The Poland MFA is committed to continuing and doubling or even tripling its support for the Local Authorities Information Center in Moldova, and it is now funding the establishment of PSF offices in two other countries (Ukraine and Georgia), which has a multiplier effect in strengthening relationship in those other beneficiary countries as well. Though it was not part of the evaluation project sample, Poland's MFA reported that its EDCP activity in Belarus also made its relationship there stronger.

Estonia has also expressed its commitment to long term support for the training it initiated in EDCP projects for regional journalists in Ukraine on countering hate speech and disinformation and improving the quality and independence of journalism.

When a EDCP project resulted from a proposal that was not brought by the emerging donor, the relationship building results were much weaker. For example, the Bulgaria Agriculture Project in Georgia was actually designed by the senior USDA local staff member in Georgia, who proposed the project to the Bulgarian Food Safety Institute. Contacts made during that project by Georgians who went on study tours to Bulgaria have not led to continuing relationships.

#### **Conclusions**

Several factors, if present in the design of EDCP projects, make the likelihood of enduring relationships between emerging donor and beneficiary country more likely: initiation of the relationship by the emerging donor, who takes responsibility for engaging via involvement in or leadership of the project design; adequate frequency of monitoring; provision of technical

expertise by the emerging donor in the recipient country; and travel funding to enable the beneficiaries to spend time in the emerging donor country building those relationships.

### **Recommendations:**

Relationship building should be fostered by using co-creation between the emerging donor, the U.S. subject matter expert, and the assistance beneficiary country in the project design process. That relationship should be nurtured by building periodic contact between emerging donor mentors and beneficiary mentees into the project implementation process.

## **2. To what extent is the technical quality of the assistance provided at least equivalent to that which would be provided if it were fully funded by the U.S. government?**

### **Findings:**

EDCP activities in Local Government in Moldova and in Media outside of Kiev in Ukraine had the most impact. The general reasons for the greater impact of these two EDCP projects can be attributed to:

- Deeper engagement and commitment by the emerging donors (PSF in the Moldova case, and Estonia's Eastern Partnership Center in the Ukraine case);
- Better design of the projects because they included a long term series of linked interventions, in both cases;
- More engagement by the emerging donor in the direct delivery of assistance in the Moldova case, and in the close monitoring of the assistance in the Estonia case; and
- Closer links to other U.S. programming in the Moldova case; right from the first EDCP grant, this was a priority assistance area to USAID. which was providing the grant management services in the Moldova case.

These are the two biggest success stories of the EDCP grants that the team evaluated. EDCP investment in local government with PSF in Moldova, where USAID helped the Fund register to do business (which was the first time PSF did that anywhere), which led to a series of investments jointly by Poland and EDCP and was linked to EU large scale funding for municipalities. This in turn led to a new USAID large scale local government project to which SlovakAid will contribute \$300,000 according to a Memorandum of Understanding it has signed with USAID. As a result, the Poland MFA agreed to continue funding for the Local Authorities Information Center in Moldova for the long term, and has funded PSF to open field offices in Georgia and Ukraine. Even so, the EDCP grant that the team observed in which PSF was awarding sub-grants to municipalities for regional Local Area Government investments planned and executed by groups of nine municipalities each, had serious technical and political flaws and presented poor models for follow-on applications to the EU for investment funds. In some cases the investments created state-owned enterprises that would compete with the private sector, not a good model for U.S. funding to support, and in other cases the funds were allocated to private businesses without a fair competitive process or to unmaintained public plazas that became eye sores. (Details are in Attachment #4.)

The second success story involves EDCP investments in projects with Estonia and the Czech Republic in Ukraine for the training of regional journalists and journalism students outside of Kiev. These activities increased the skills of journalists and journalism students to detect disinformation and hate speech, to fact-check content and verify sources, and to produce quality, fact-based content. Estonia provided monitoring and one journalist as a co-trainer and has a long term strategic commitment to this topic in the Eastern Partnership countries which it reports that it will continue with its own resources, if EDCP is no longer available. The Czech project produced a website for StopFake in the Czech Republic by the StopFake Ukraine non-governmental organization (NGO), as well as FactCheck manual for journalists and journalism students in Ukraine. However, follow-through was inadequate on getting the manual and website links out to students, and there was inadequate work on identifying appropriate student trainees and follow-through with them, though these were all grant requirements.

The quality of results obtained from the Riga Graduate School of Law (RGSL) scholarships for Central Asians revealed a number of serious weaknesses, mainly caused by the weaknesses in the process for recruiting and vetting applicants for the scholarships. The most serious problem is that the application and vetting process, as well as the English language phone interview process, are not recruiting the kind of untraveled mid-level candidate that the scholarships are targeting – people who have not been exposed to the EU, but who rank high enough that they could move their country in that Western direction, if they are exposed to the political and economic benefits of that relationship over the course of their careers, and who have adequate English language competency to understand the RGSL training. Also, there are some curriculum weaknesses that would be important to address, notably that the teaching is mostly lecture-based rather than using simulations, applied exercises and other proven adult learning best practice techniques. In addition, one of the six weeks is spent on travel to Brussels and Luxembourg to meet EU officials, but the students reported learning little from those meetings, as they do not get to observe any EU processes, but just hear one person after another lecture about their work. On the positive side, the RGSL faculty (both resident and adjunct) are excellent and well qualified, the administration is efficient and dedicated, and the six-week duration of the training is well conceived; a longer duration would discourage senior applicants. On the other hand, the one-week anti-corruption training under EDCP was too short, and only attracted “development tourists,” rather than serious trainees.

Activities in agricultural export promotion that the team evaluated in Georgia did not have much impact. The training and negotiation of meeting agricultural export standards to qualify to export to the EU is a long-term complicated process and is not the kind of issue that EDCP is a good tool for addressing, for the most part. Serendipitously, honey exports may be enabled by the EDCP investment in this activity, because the trip to Bulgaria alerted the trainees to ways that bee diseases could be addressed without anti-biotics. The agricultural trade expert on the team provides detailed notes in Attachment #5 about the multiple reasons why these activities were not appropriate EDCP investments, in both design and execution, including the fact that some of the technical content promoted is counter to U.S. trade standards and interests and is the subject of U.S. and EU conflict at this time. Also, there were other emerging donors who are much farther along on the relevant technical topics, who would have been better partners for the transfer of knowledge on these topics. In sum, the team recommends that EDCP not fund agriculture projects unless they are tightly tied

into a larger USAID-managed agriculture project in which they will be closely monitored and mentored by technically qualified monitoring staff.

Activities in Energy Efficiency in Ukraine were relevant and stimulated dialogue between stakeholders, but their impact was limited, given the narrow scope of activities (just a few one-hour lectures in one case, or a few trade fairs and a study tour in another case), lacked follow-through and follow-on, and were not linked to other USAID or U.S. government energy projects. The USAID Energy Office Director told the team that the EU has lots of funding for energy efficiency in Ukraine, and this sub-sector does not need additional donor resources.

### **Conclusions:**

Technical quality of the EDCP grants' assistance is the greatest weakness that the team observed. All of the training that the team observed in all countries was lecture-based, lacking adult experiential training techniques. The weaknesses resulted from insufficient technical expertise applied to the design of project proposals, and insufficient technically qualified monitoring that could have resulted in in-process improvements during implementation. On a positive note, in the training for the media in Ukraine, the team observed that trust had been inspired in the trainees, based on the trainers' credibility, due to their name recognition and local knowledge.

### **Recommendations:**

If EDCP is to be continued, each proposal being seriously considered for funding should be reviewed by a qualified technical expert and any necessary improvements should be negotiated before the award is made. A cooperative agreement rather than a grant can be used if U.S. substantive involvement is desirable.

EDCP projects should be monitored by a technically qualified staff member, even if that person is not chosen as the GOR, so that flaws can be noted and communicated to the grantee if necessary.

The best way to assure this is to only approve EDCP projects that complement and relate to other larger programs of U.S. government assistance, which can contribute to follow-on sustainability and technical monitoring, and to enhance the process of integrating EDCP projects with those larger programs in the way that EDCP activities are implemented.

All proposals that include training should incorporate experiential adult learning techniques and grant funds should be allowed to be used to obtain the expertise of a qualified training designer who can introduce the grantee to these methods.

If U.S. Embassies in Central Asia are willing to devote their time to identification of candidates that really need the training that the RGSL in Latvia is offering, ACE should encourage those Embassies to start to select candidates a year ahead of their scholarship travel, so they can ensure that their candidates can meet the English language standards in time for that training. If EDCP funding for those Central Asian scholarships will be continued, ACE should work with RGSL to improve their use of adult experiential learning techniques, and ensure that the use of the students' time in Brussels and Luxembourg will either allow them to observe some EU processes, or be

deleted from the scholarships. ACE should discontinue funding at RGSL for the one-week anti-corruption training, as this opportunity has been misused by Ministries as a reward for their staff, rather than sending people who are committed to using the training back in their home countries.

### **3. To what extent is the management burden on Embassy staff worth the effort and could that be lessened with different procedures?**

#### **Findings**

Though the individual grants that the team evaluated were small, ranging from as low as \$65,000 to a uniquely high one of \$500,000 for the U.S. share of project costs, and were typically less than \$250,000, the way EDCP was implemented from 2016-2018 was at least as complex (if not more so) than managing a large grant or contract because it involved all of the following actors in each project that was funded:

EUR/ACE Program Manager: Managed the calls for proposals and the DC-based proposal vetting and decision process

U.S. Embassy in the Beneficiary Country: Identified proposals and vetted them, then provided the award, management, and financial services. Various U.S. government agencies made each award depending on theme and their willingness to provide these grant management services. This included USAID; Political, Economic, or Public Affairs Embassy sections; and USDA in Washington (since it does not have field staff qualified to do these roles).

Emerging Donor Embassy in the Beneficiary Country: Identified or screened proposals and/or vetted them, managed the communications with the MFAs in their capitals for funding decisions.

Emerging Donor Implementers: Included the recipients of grants from either or both of the emerging donor and EDCP. They are usually based in their home countries, have varying legal statuses ranging from being an arm of their government to being completely private organizations, for-profit, or non-profit. PSF established a presence in Moldova with the assistance of USAID under their first EDCP grant there, and the Czech NGO People in Need (PIN) had a field office in Georgia at the time of the evaluation.

Beneficiary Country Implementers: Comprised frequently of local NGOs, who were in many cases the direct recipients of the EDCP grants; they sub-contracted with local firms in some cases for logistical or other services as part of the grant activities.

Beneficiary Country Governments: These were frequently among the beneficiaries of the EDCP-funded projects (training, study tours, technical assistance), at either a national or local government level.

Despite six years of engagement with EDCP, the MFAs that the team leader interviewed were still confused about how EDCP is supposed to work and they asked whether proposals should be submitted to the U.S. Embassies in beneficiary countries, in the emerging donor's own country, or to EUR/ACE in Washington.

The capacity of GORs in the various parts of the field embassies varied widely, as did their office's views on whether the results of EDCP grants are worth the management burden placed on them. PAS was most likely to be willing and able to make the small grants efficiently, but they lacked the sector expertise or staff time to monitor them unless the themes fell within the media and civil society sphere. USAID was most receptive to the management role when its resources were limited or declining, and EDCP offered resources to address a critical area of assistance that USAID wanted to support. This was the case for the first PSF EDCP grant for local government work in Moldova, which was awarded at a time of declining resources for the USAID Mission. Now the situation has been reversed – USAID's resources have increased, and the agency now has built on the earlier EDCP investments in local governance to design a large multi-year USAID local governance. The Mission Director at the time of the EDCP evaluation wants to transition into a new relationship with emerging donors that no longer includes EDCP, but will rather involve bilateral Memoranda of Understanding between USAID and SlovakAid, for example, under which the other donor will either transfer its own funds in the sector to USAID to manage under the U.S. project, or else an emerging donor organization (e.g. PSF) will be funded directly by USAID's project without going through the EDCP process. The Political section in the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine felt obliged to provide 20% time from a local staff member to manage two EDCP grants, though Ukraine has the largest and most complex assistance portfolio of the ACE countries, and would prefer to allocate its staff time towards programming and managing the large bilateral pool of resources.

### **Conclusions:**

The EDCP process for identifying, vetting, and awarding grants is overly complex for the small scale of resources involved, yet the implementation process lacks adequate qualified monitoring. Though POL and ECON offices are more likely to value the political aspects of the relationship that EDCP offers them vis-à-vis the emerging donors, they are not adequately trained in grant management or monitoring, and they for the most part will not have the technical subject matter skills to monitor the implementation process and catch weaknesses that need to be addressed. PAS and USAID are the most qualified sections of the Embassy to manage the award, implementation and monitoring process of EDCP grants, if the subjects of the grants fall within the realm of their technical skill areas (media, civil society, disinformation for PAS; and energy, governance, economic assistance for USAID). Emerging donors are not sure who to address in the process of reaching out to the U.S. government to propose EDCP collaboration. They have reported confusion when they are approached by USAID bilaterally, and that makes them wonder whether those initiatives replace EDCP.

### **Recommendations:**

EDCP grants should mainly be managed by either PAS or USAID from now on, depending upon theme, and should be linked to broader U.S. assistance initiatives.

If POL, PAS or ECON staff want to manage an EDCP grant, their offices should dedicate time for the relevant staff to obtain the necessary training. ACE could offer to provide supplemental training in grant monitoring for POL/ECON if they will be monitoring EDCP grants in the future. The POL/ECON EDCP grant monitor in Ukraine told the team that she had learned a lot about

how to monitor EDCP grants, and the kinds of questions to ask during site visits, from observing the evaluation team while providing it with translation support.

EUR/ACE should reach out to emerging donors to explain the difference between EDCP and USAID's bilateral tools of reengagement with emerging donors, which usually involve the signing of bilateral MOUs or implementation letters that transfer funds in one direction or the other between the two donors as part of implementation of a larger USAID Project.

It is not recommended to use USDA as a future GOR or Field Monitor; they do not have the trained field staff in place for these roles, and there is a disconnect between the DC-based GOR and sector expert, and the local staff proposal writer/grant monitor in the field in Georgia.

EUR/ACE has noted that many EDCP grants are not branded as part of the Department of State EDCP initiative, especially when the grants are managed by USAID. ACE should provide detailed guidance on marking and branding requirements for inclusion in all EDCP grants. This will need training support from Embassy staff or the USAID Development Outreach Officer, to ensure that grantees understand their marking and branding responsibilities for EDCP grant-funded events and products.

**4. To what extent does participating in this program strengthen the emerging donor's capacity to be a donor (even though this was not an explicit objective of the program)?**

**Methodology**

From early December through the end of February 2019, the Team Leader and EDCP Program Manager identified the appropriate points of contact, scheduled interviews and then talked on the phone for up to one hour with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) key informants in each of the Emerging Donor countries (aside from Latvia, where the team leader had conducted that interview in person during her time in the field). Below are the questions that each MFA contact was asked to answer:

1. Has participation in the State Department's Emerging Donor Challenge Program resulted in any changes in how your country plans and/or implements its foreign aid? For example, has your country adapted any US government foreign aid processes or practices for its own use?
2. Has your country's reputation or effectiveness as an emerging donor been affected in any way by its participation in the EDCP?
3. Have any relationships that your country started as a donor under the EDCP program led to longer term or larger assistance efforts that were or will be funded with its own resources?
4. Does your country have any changes to suggest that could improve the way the EDCP works in the future?

5. Please describe the current process that your country undertakes to allocate its own foreign aid resources, and the countries and theme areas that it plans to focus on over the foreseeable future.
6. Does your country's foreign aid program have (or plan to have) a field presence outside of your country, and if so, how is (or will that be) that structured?

**Findings:**

Because of reputation improvement and project effectiveness supported by EDCP co-funding, some EU donors are getting access to implementing EU assistance resources, e.g. a new project that SlovakAid is implementing in Kenya with EU resources. The donor must have an aid agency to qualify for this (this is not present in Poland).

In the Team Leader's phone interviews with the MFAs of the emerging donors, all reported that their ability to manage larger longer-term projects had been improved by EDCP, and that this improved their reputation with both other donors and the beneficiary countries. It also increased their confidence in taking on larger amounts of funding and making longer term assistance commitments.

In a few cases, the emerging donor adapted U.S. assistance practices for their own use, such as the Czech Development Agency starting to sign MOUs with German aid organizations on the U.S. model, and adopting the U.S. steering committee format.

**Conclusions:**

One of the greatest strengths of EDCP, in the view of the team, is that it has strengthened the emerging donors' capabilities, albeit as an unintended effect.

**Recommendations:**

In the future, the aim of strengthening the emerging donor's capability as a donor should become an explicit element of the EDCP program, which can be enhanced in a few simple ways. First, there can be more intentional engagement between the U.S. proposed grant manager and the emerging donor's MFA and its assistance implementer in a co-creation project design process. For USAID, this should be easy to implement, as USAID/E&E has committed itself to using co-creation for at least 50% of its assistance awards over the current 2018-2022 period of the recently approved EUR/E&E Joint Regional Strategy (JRS).

Joint monitoring of EDCP projects by the U.S. grant monitor along with the staff of the emerging donor should also be encouraged.

Though ACE is planning to experiment with delegating EDCP proposal review and approval wholly to the field in its potential new call for a seventh round of proposals in April 2019, it is recommended that the EUR/ACE EDCP Program Manager have an annual phone conversation with each emerging donor's point of contact (POC) in its capital, to review overall progress

towards key milestones in the emerging donor's development as a donor and its future plans, as part of fostering an on-going relationship between ACE and the emerging donors, which may lay the foundation for a scale-up in collaboration in the future.

A key recommendation is that EUR/ACE should work more strategically with emerging donors going forward. Along these lines, it is recommended that ACE review the emerging donors' posted multi-year strategies, including their targeted themes by country, and consider making a long term commitment to a partnership with specific donors for specific themes in agreed shared target counties. In our region their focus is on the Eastern Partnership Countries of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova (plus Belarus for Poland).

This would allow agreement with each preferred donor on how the co-funded projects would contribute to both their own strategies and the State Department's 2018-2022 EUR/E&E JRS and the relevant Integrated Country Strategies (ICSs). As it does in open solicitations under EDCP at present, ACE would set parameters for the kinds of joint projects that could be submitted to ACE for consideration for matching funding. Under this scenario the annual process of considering project proposals from those chosen emerging donors could be routinized to use the same annual format that EUR/ACE already uses for the Annual Budget Review (ABR), with submissions from emerging donors using the same template as is used for other projects proposed for ACE funding. ACE would be able to discontinue the open grant solicitations that have been used for EDCP project identification over the past six years.

ACE should reach out to emerging donors to clarify the difference between EDCP mode of assistance via open calls for proposals and USAID's outreach to propose bilateral MOUs with donors such as SlovakAid in Moldova as a mode of partnership and collaboration on local governance.

ACE should require co-endorsement by the emerging donors of submitted project proposals, as well as co-funding of the application, and more participation in assistance delivery and monitoring from the emerging donors.

**5. To what extent is the assistance better absorbed and/or targeted because it is delivered by partnership with an emerging donor that has already been through the same process of reform and democracy-building?**

**Findings:**

The team found little evidence overall that assistance offered under EDCP had been better absorbed by a beneficiary country because it was delivered by a country that had also been through a transition from communism. The most compelling evidence of the application of the transition experience of the emerging donor to the assistance needs of the beneficiary country was seen in the team's discussion with a former city council member who was a beneficiary of the Slovak assistance to municipalities on energy efficiency, and the trade fairs with the Slovak private sector that showcased their energy efficiency and clean energy solutions in Slovakia that could be applied in Ukraine. He attested to the municipal district heating systems and the building types that needed

to be retrofitted for greater energy efficiency being very similar in both Slovakia and Ukraine due to their shared Soviet infrastructure design.

It is true that Latvia's experience in macroeconomic stabilization and human rights promotion post-communism enabled it to design a well-targeted curriculum for the Central Asian Republics that addresses their need to protect human rights and reviews the kinds of tools that can be applied in the event of any macroeconomic crisis in their countries.

In the EDCP projects targeting the countering of disinformation in Ukraine, the emerging donors of Estonia and the Czech Republic were besieged concurrently with the kind of barrage of Russian disinformation that is targeted at Ukraine, so they are struggling in parallel to come up with technical and training solutions to improving public recognition of disinformation and to counter it with Western content.

### **Conclusions:**

Evidence is weak on whether the transition experience is being transferred in most EDCP activities and there is even less evidence that assistance is being absorbed, since the grants are so small and time-limited.<sup>3</sup>

### **Overall Final Recommendations:**

ACE should continue the EDCP in a redesigned fashion above the \$1M per year level; the MFAs in Latvia, the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia have all expressed appreciation for the increase in aid effectiveness that EDCP has resourced for their countries. Estonia, Poland and Slovakia are committed to sustaining support for institutions, initiatives and relationships in assisted countries that were started under EDCP.

ACE should clarify monitoring expectations with the U.S. GOR/Activity Monitors (e.g. site visits to confirm follow-through on distribution of grant products and benefits to grantees and beneficiaries and teleconferences with emerging donors to confirm benefits to them and results of their monitoring). Links to other U.S. projects or initiatives should be required, pre-defined, and used as a guideline during grant implementation. The selection, funding and reporting cycles between ACE and the Emerging Donors need to be harmonized and better coordinated. Most or all emerging donors are on a calendar year funding cycle and vet NGO proposals in March for awards made in April.

ACE and the posts should apply more technical expertise to the monitoring of EDCP projects and the co-design of their final forms. A closer longer term strategic alignment of USG and emerging donors' co-investments in specific countries and sectors would enhance assistance results. Experience under EDCP indicates that the potential for assistance impact and sustainability is greater if a multi-year series of interventions with the target group are funded. Technical

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<sup>3</sup> EUR/CRP believes that the findings and conclusions for this question are not wholly reliable because they do not take into account ACE's, Posts' and EDCP review panels' broader view and expectations about how Central Europe donor transition experience is reflected in EDCP project implementation. See Attachment #7 for more details.

monitoring should include more involvement by sector experts in State and USAID, and possibly in the NGO community. Those sector experts should also be more involved in grant management.

ACE should cut back to one grant selection cycle per year to be able conduct more in-depth preparations for grant calls and selections, as well as grant management. March-April seems the best time to coordinate on grant selection in view of the typical emerging donor's funding cycle.

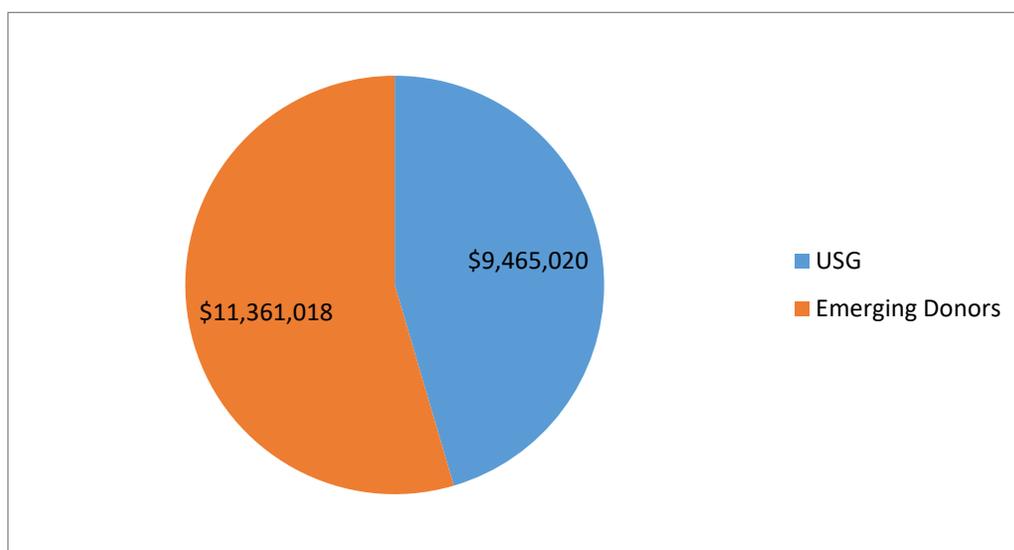
ACE should focus EDCP on sectors like capacity building in local governance and media disinformation that are more conducive to impact from a small grant project.

Attachments:

1. Overview of EDCP Resource Mobilization and Allocation in Charts
2. Media Activity Observations in Ukraine
3. Energy Activity Observations in Ukraine
4. Local Government Activity Observations in Moldova
5. Agriculture Activity Observations in Georgia
6. Riga Graduate School of Law (RGSL) Fellowships for Central Asians  
Activity Observations in Latvia
7. EDCP Program Management's Definition of Transition Experience

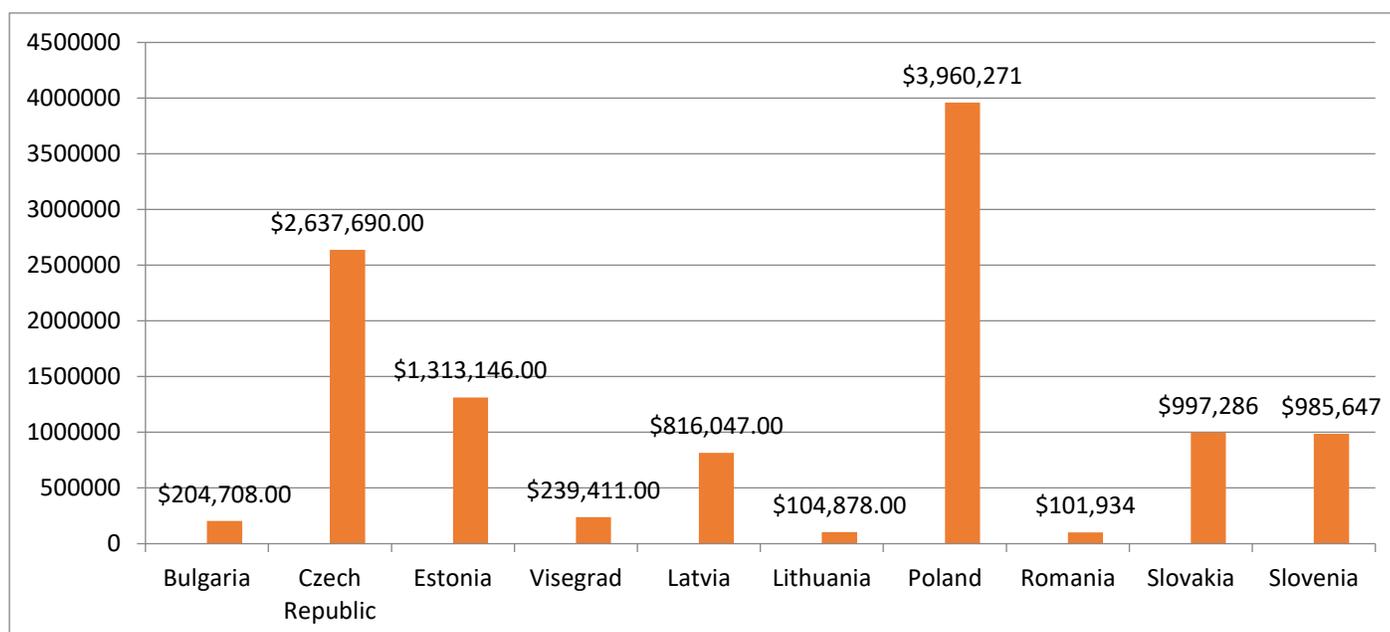
## Attachment #1: Overview of EDCP Resource Mobilization and Allocation through Charts

The following four charts are based on Excel spreadsheet analysis volunteered by evaluation team member Olesia Gardner of the information on the 73 EDCP grants awarded from its inception through the end of calendar year 2018. The design of EDCP requires matching funds from the emerging donors. The following pie chart shows the comparative shares of EDCP matching funds mobilized versus EUR/ACE's EDCP funding contributions:

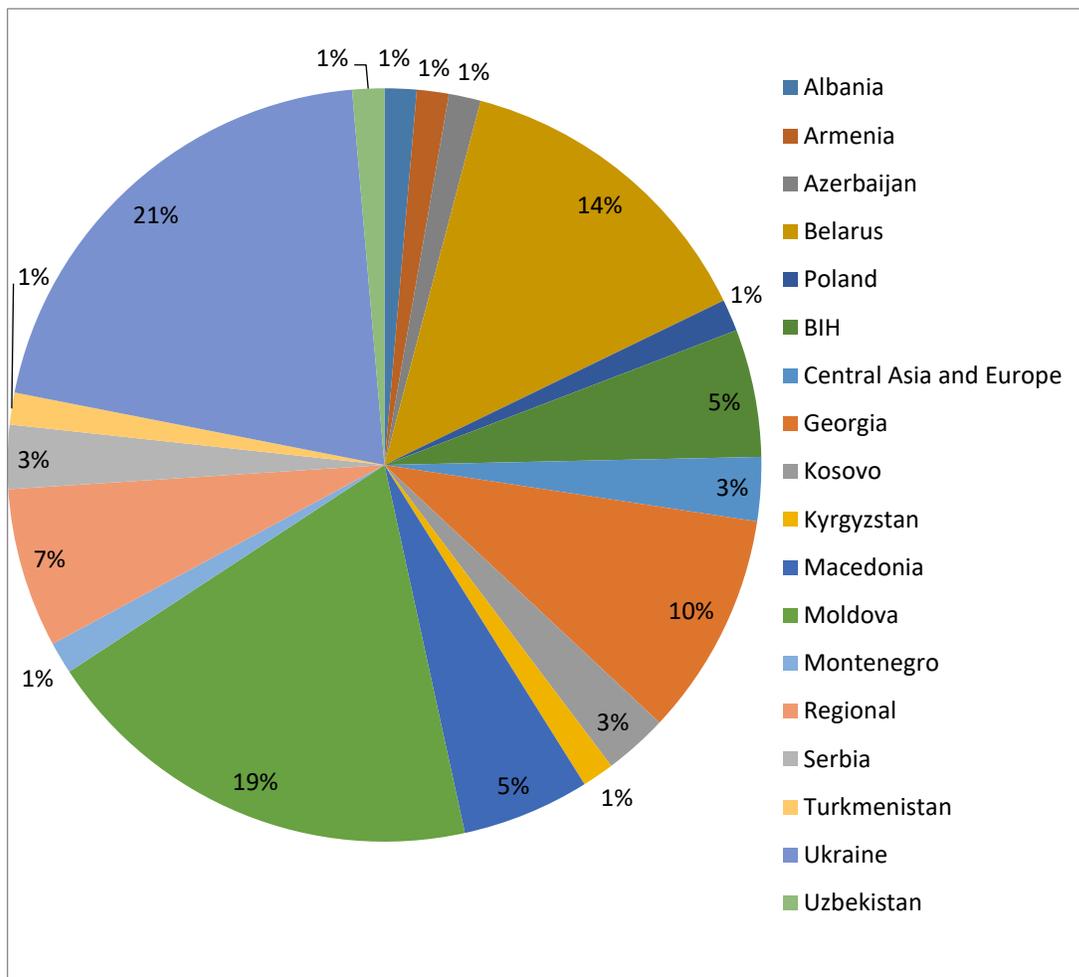


The value of the emerging donors' matching funds is charted by donor in the following table:

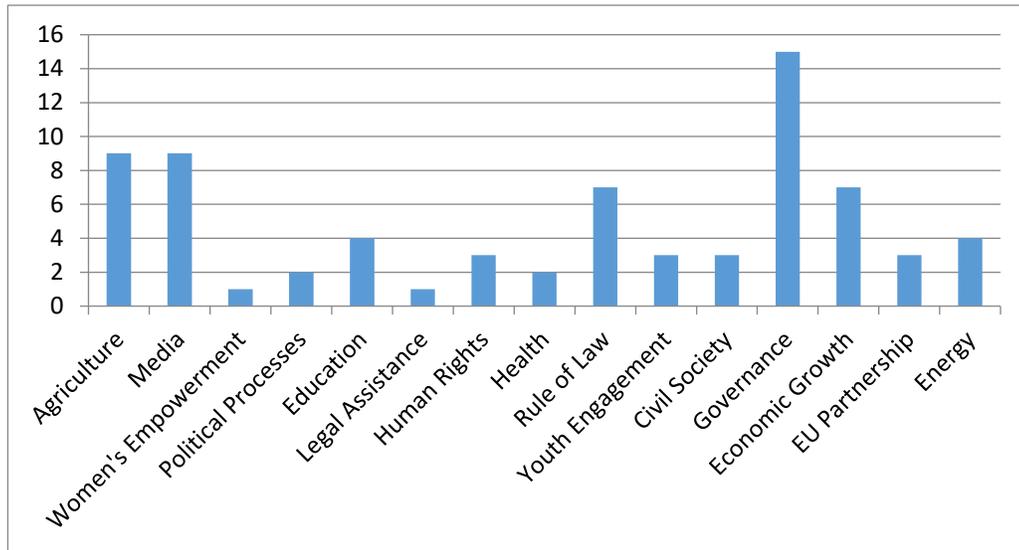
Emerging Donor Contribution to the EDCP



The following pie chart illustrates the percentage of the total number of EDCP grants that EDCP has funded per recipient country, and the share that were regional grants:



The numbers of EDCP grants per sectoral area of assistance are shown in the following bar chart:



## **Attachment #2: Media Activity Observations in Ukraine by Media Team Member Olesia Gardner**

### **Summary**

In order to build its partnership with emerging donor governments in Central Europe and the Baltic region, in 2012 the U.S. Government created a “Challenge Fund” to co-finance assistance to targeted countries in the Balkans and Eurasia. This partnership is intended to leverage the experience that these donors (the so-called “CE-10” of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia) gained in their own democratic and economic transitions.

The Media segment of the broader Emerging Donor Challenge Program (EDCP) evaluation, conducted in June 2018, covers two media projects co-funded with the Czech and Estonian governments under Rounds Four and Five of the EDCP. The Estonian Center of Eastern Partnership (ECEAP) partnered with the Ukrainian Crisis Media Center (UCMC) on training local journalists with the objective of raising the professional capacity of regional media representatives. The training topics focused on hate speech and journalistic standards. The second project is a collaboration between the Czech non-governmental organization Association for International Affairs (AMO), and two prominent Ukrainian media organizations – StopFake and FactCheck. The project purpose is to share Ukrainian experience in combatting Russian disinformation with the Czech partners, and to train Ukrainian local journalism students and activists in checking the accuracy of claims by elected officials.

The observations led to the conclusion that collaboration with emerging donors on media assistance in Ukraine has shown the following positive outcomes: sustained relationships between Eastern European and Ukrainian partners, successful exchange of experience from both sides, and leveraging of funding. With funding from the Fifth Round of the EDCP ECEAP and UCMC organized seminars to build the capacity of regional journalists in five regions of Ukraine: Odessa, Kherson, Mariupol, Zaporizhe and Mykolayiv. With their request of funding from Round Six of the EDCP, the partnership plans to expand the scope of activities to cover the Lugansk, Dnepropetrovsk, Kharkov, Sumy and Chernihiv regions. Estonian and Ukrainian trainers equally share the responsibilities for developing training curriculum and leading the sessions. The Czech/Ukrainian collaboration will continue through December 2019 with funding from the Czech MFA. The partnership project provided funding for five master classes for journalism students in the regions focused on fact checking of statements of elected officials. The Czech side also benefited from the experience in building a website and content exchange with StopFake. The project ends in September 2018, but the Czech NGO secured funding to continue this project through December 2019.

Despite the general success of the projects, several limitations were observed: weak monitoring and evaluation system are in place; selection of training participants is limited to open-call participation with no selection criteria; and sustainability of the results achieved is limited. The EDCP program provides a great platform for collaboration between Eastern European and Ukrainian partners, but in order to achieve more sustainable results it is recommended to have better coordination with other thematic projects managed by U.S. government agencies and to require the applicants to have a robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan with the focus on achieving sustainable results.

### **Methodology**

The success of implementing media programs under the EDCP in Ukraine was measured using qualitative methods of data collection: a desk review, interviews with the implementing partners and beneficiaries, training observation and focus group interviews with training participants. On the recipient side, the evaluation team interviewed local journalists, journalism students and Odessa Legal Academy School of

Journalism faculty. On the implementing partner side the team interviewed Ukrainian, Estonian and Czech partners. The Estonian partner (ECEAP) and the Czech partner (AMO) are non-governmental organizations that receive funding directly from their countries' Ministries of Foreign Affairs. Access to the emerging donor community was limited to conversations with ECEAP and AMO, who explained the Czech and Estonian government cooperation. For general understanding of U.S. media assistance to Ukraine, the team met with the PAO, USAID/DG Senior Foreign Service National (FSN), Media Development Fund program team, Assistance Coordinator and the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM).

## **Analysis of Findings**

### *Objective One: Evaluating the Enduring Relationships Between Partners*

Interviews with respondents strongly suggested that EDCP succeeded in building and sustaining successful partnerships between Eastern European and Ukrainian partners. The commitment of the Estonian and Czech partners to continue collaboration with the Ukrainian counterparts was reiterated on numerous occasions during the field visit.

The Estonian Center of Eastern Partnership (ECEAP) is a training and research center focusing on the six countries of the EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP): Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Through its activities, ECEAP aims to develop relations with the EaP countries while contributing to the advancement of the overall goals of the EU's policy in the region. In December 2014, it identified gaps of media literacy in the regions, particularly stressing the importance of raising journalistic standards.

The Ukraine Crisis Media Center was founded in 2014 as a platform for journalists and independent media to share information about the events in Ukraine following Russia's annexation of Crimea. The center has been instrumental in organizing press briefings, events and trainings for journalists. UCMC's regional expertise, connections with journalists, experts and international community, and organizational capacity, together with ECEAP trainers and expertise in successful transition to democracy, serve as the foundation for fruitful collaboration. Furthermore, both sides expressed strong commitment to continue their cooperation. Their follow-on proposal submitted in response to the solicitation for proposals for the EDCP Round Six focuses on building capacity of journalists in five additional regions of Ukraine not covered by the initial partnership project.

AMO is a Prague-based non-partisan NGO/think tank dedicated to research and education in the field of international relations and Czech foreign policy since 1997. In cooperation with its partners in Eastern Europe, the Association transmits the Czech experience during the transition period of the 1990s. With funding from the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Association has been sharing information on the Czech Republic's accession to the EU with journalists in Ukraine since 2006. In September 2016, AMO partnered with StopFake under the EDCP on a project focusing on training young civil society leaders and journalists in fact checking.

StopFake was created by professors and students of Kyiv Mohyla Journalism School on March 2, 2014 in response to the annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine. The idea behind their Stopfake.org fact-checking site was to verify information, raise media literacy in Ukraine and help journalists draw a clear line between journalism and propaganda. Initially, the goal of the project was to verify and refute disinformation and propaganda about the events in Ukraine. The project developed into an information hub for experts to examine and analyze all aspects of Kremlin propaganda within and outside Ukraine. Today, the Stopfake.org experts fact check, debunk, edit, translate, research and disseminate information in 11 languages: Russian, English, Spanish, Romanian, Bulgarian, French, Italian, Dutch, Czech, German and Polish.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> About US StopFake - <https://www.stopfake.org/en/about-us/>

The collaboration between StopFake and the AMO under the EDCP is focused on sharing Ukrainian expertise in creating the Czech version of the StopFake.org website ([www.stopfake.org/cz/domu](http://www.stopfake.org/cz/domu)), which was launched in 2016. The main audience for the website is Czech journalists and civil servants, and the underlying objective is to combat Russian propaganda. StopFake's Czech service is funded by the Czech funding through December 2019. The Czech side is interested in continuous collaboration on this project because Czech media outlets do not have foreign correspondents, and the partnership provides exchange of news from Ukraine. In 2017 the partnership supported 80 individual contributions on news articles.

Under the initial proposal, StopFake intended to contribute trainers for a second objective of the EDCP project, training regional fact checkers. However, because StopFake had other commitments, the activities under this objective moved over to another partner, Oleksander Gorohovsky, who has been running his own website, [Factcheck.com.ua](http://Factcheck.com.ua) since 2016. Currently the website is not operational because the domain name has expired. Oleksander Gorohovsky, under the EDCP, published a fact checking manual and conducted master classes for journalism students. AMO secured funding to continue working with Gorohovsky on training journalism students and building the network on local fact checkers.

#### *Objective Two: Technical Quality of the Assistance Provided*

The media projects in Ukraine under the EDCP are implemented and managed as grants. The desk review of grant proposals and agreements revealed general compliance with foreign assistance grant management requirements. Both projects displayed a high degree of organization and extensive collaborative efforts involving the emerging donor and Ukrainian partners. The training of journalists that was observed during the evaluation took place in Mykolaiv, a city that is conveniently located for the local regional participants. The training facility was adequate, and UCMA provided materials, supplies and food. The training curriculum was designed by the Ukrainian and Estonian partners and focused on reporting and compliance with journalistic standards while operating in a conflict environment. The training was conducted by trainers comprising a psychologist specializing in conflict social psychology, a Ukrainian human rights activist, and a journalist from Estonia.

The training component as a collaboration between the Czech and Ukrainian partners was not observed because that training was conducted during the academic year. However, the evaluation team had a chance to meet with the Dean of the journalism faculty of the Odessa Legal Academy, and some journalism students who participated in master classes offered by Oleksander Gorohovsky. According to students, the Master classes were offered as a one-off event in a lecture format to all interested students. The participants found the content helpful, but missed the practical applications of a smaller-group format. The students also noted that it would be useful to have access (online or hard copy) to the book on fact checking that was published by Oleksander Gorohovsky.

Some shortcomings were observed regarding program planning and implementation: weak monitoring and evaluation processes were in place; lack of transparency in the selection of training participants; and poor coordination with other assistance activities in Ukraine.

#### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Current monitoring and evaluation systems for both projects do not assess the impact of the projects' activities. The proposals do not contain a logical framework and do not contain an M&E plan describing how the projects' progress would be monitored and evaluated. The reports provide immediate outputs but do not provide the necessary analysis to inform strategic decision-making or elaborate on the success of the project, or how it affects target populations. ECEAP uses a flexible approach to M&E and does not have a systematic system of data collection and analysis.

A needs assessment was not carried out for either project. The emerging donor partners relied on the expertise and knowledge of their Ukrainian partners to identify the needs and design training curriculum. A simple assessment of the needs of journalists and journalism students in the region would have provided a better foundation for both projects. The evaluation trip revealed that the journalism students are keen on hands-on practical training in smaller groups and prefer it over the lecture format offered by Oleksander Gorohovsky. A needs assessment for the training of regional journalists on fact checking would have revealed their strong interest in peer review and analysis of their written work. In both cases, the needs assessment would have provided information on making more informed decisions on who the training participants should be and the best methods to invite them to participate.

It is recommended that in future proposal solicitations a proposed M&E plan should be required during proposal solicitation, along with a needs assessment, formal or informal, conducted by the applicant or taken from a publication that describes the need for an intervention. Complete applications should include a logical framework and a detailed M&E narrative and plan. Incorporating a well-designed monitoring and evaluation process into a project is an efficient method for documenting the effects that a project seeks. Applicants should demonstrate the capacity to provide objectives with measurable outputs and outcomes.

### **Training Component**

In 2017, over 200 journalism students received training on how to verify the statements of elected officials through five master classes on fact checking organized in Melitopol, Berdiansk, Zaporizhia, Kharkiv, and Sumy. Master classes were open to all interested students from the faculty of journalism. After the lecture offered by Oleksander Gorohovsky, fifty-four students expressed interest in mentorship and 22 students drafted materials that were published on the website created as part of the project ([www.checkregion-ua.info](http://www.checkregion-ua.info)). The training curriculum was prepared by Oleksander Gorohovsky, who published a fact checking manual in 2016. The students gave positive feedback about the training, pointing out that the topic of fact checking should be introduced into the general journalism education curriculum. However, they also noted that a lecture format only provides an overview of the topic, and does not allow for in-depth learning. They prefer a practical workshop-type format in smaller groups. The students also noted that they did not receive any materials during the lecture and would benefit from a hard copy of the manual placed at the university library. The respondents mentioned that the electronic version of the manual could be distributed through the university's Facebook page.

The training of journalists on reporting in conflict environment under the Estonia/Ukraine project took place in five regions. As part of the program, the training alumni are requested to send two pieces of published work to the Ukraine Crisis Media Center for feedback and analysis. The ten most active participants are selected to participate in Press Tours to Kyiv, and will attend the Festival of Opinions in Estonia in August 2018. The project will end with a trip to Brussels, where the participants will be exposed firsthand to EU processes.

UCMC provided organizational and logistical support to the project, including publishing an announcement for the opportunity in the region and selecting the participants. UCMC said they had difficulty in finding participants for the training in some regions. Another problem identified was that the participants were already aware of the topics presented to them. The more complicated but essential effort would be to involve the outliers, such as journalists publishing for privately-owned newspapers with a strict editorial policy and journalists from government-owned media outlets.

### **Coordination with other Projects and Sustainability**

The evaluation revealed little or no coordination between the two EDCP projects in the broader scale of U.S. media assistance to Ukraine. Both projects fall within the thematic area of media literacy. This topic is current and relevant, as information overload is an increasing challenge, and it can be difficult for media consumers to discern what is accurate and reliable. Conversations with PAO, USAID and Media

Development Fund (MDF) media program managers indicated that media literacy is very low and there is a lot of work that needs to be done. The EDCP activities are not duplicative of the work done by other agencies, but coordination would be beneficial in achieving more sustainable results.

For example, the USAID's U-Media project, implemented by Internews (primary partner), focuses on a wide range of media literacy activities from media monitoring to education. One of its partners, the Academy of Ukrainian Press, has been coordinating its efforts with IREX's media literacy project, managed out of the Embassy's Public Affairs Section (PAS), with the objective of introducing media literacy courses into schools. Also, with support from the U-Media program and technical assistance from Internews Ukraine, Ukrainian journalists can improve their skills and capacity with training and education. The Institute for Mass Information, Detector Media and the Pylyp Orlyk Institute for Democracy hosted trainings for national and regional journalists on working in Ukrainian conflict zones. As an example, the goal of the media literacy training in Odessa Oblast was to cultivate critical thinking in schoolchildren, local journalists and activists. The topic did not include the same topics the training for journalists under the EDCP, but both trainings could complement each other.

The Media Mobility Hub, managed by the Suspilnist Foundation, provides opportunities for students from 40 journalism faculties of Ukrainian universities. The students have an opportunity to intern in newsrooms of prominent Ukrainian media outlets and to engage in editorial work and participate in hands-on training and mentorship offered by well-known Ukrainian journalists. Cooperation with Media Development Fund grantees could reap benefits as well in areas ranging from partnership with the regional press clubs to supplementing ongoing efforts of the Academy of Ukrainian Press in training regional journalists on operating in conflict environment. In addition to the benefits of joint curriculum development and sharing training sessions, collaboration also develops a better pool of training participants, including access to more potential participants and better-developed criteria for participant selection that have been used by organizations such as Internews, IREX, AUP and others.

#### *Objective Three: Evaluating "Burden" on Staff*

Since 2014, the U.S. government has committed over \$1.3 billion in foreign assistance to Ukraine. The Embassy in Ukraine manages \$525,000 in FY2017 funds between all agencies. The PAS 56's MDF has two full-time FSNs dedicated to managing 50 grants each averaging \$5,000 – \$50,000 per grant.

In designating a GOR for the EDCP media awards performance management the Embassy divided the two media programs between the Assistance Coordination Office and PAS. As a result, the two media projects are managed separately and have little internal coordination. The GOR from PAS, who has been managing media grants for more than a decade, has a wealth of experience in grant management and in-depth understanding of Ukraine's media environment. The GOR from the Assistance Coordinator's Office is new to grants management and currently manages five EDCP grants on different thematic areas. This EDCP designated program support staff is a locally hired (FSN) who supports the Assistance Coordinator (40% time), with 20% of time dedicated to management of EDCP projects.

The evaluation team observed that both program managers were professional, knowledgeable and enthusiastic about managing the EDCP projects. Neither expressed any concern about burden in managing the projects. Grants management of the EDCP projects includes preparing grants awards and processing payments, entering payments into the ARIBA system, responding to inquiries, reviewing financial and narrative reports, and conducting two monitoring site visits.

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5 FACT SHEET: U.S. Assistance to Ukraine since February 2014 - [://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/06/15/fact-sheet-us-assistance-ukraine-february-2014](http://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/06/15/fact-sheet-us-assistance-ukraine-february-2014)

6 U.S. Foreign Aid by Country: Ukraine - [https://explorer.usaid.gov/cd/UKR?fiscal\\_year=2016&measure=Obligations](https://explorer.usaid.gov/cd/UKR?fiscal_year=2016&measure=Obligations)

The Assistance Coordination Office plans to manage all future EDCP projects. On the other hand, the Embassy's Front Office (FO) expressed concern over the extra workload would place on staff, considering the overall high levels of assistance that Ukraine has been receiving since 2014. While positively viewing the idea of cooperation with other Embassies, the FO suggested that the impact of the EDCP may not be as noticeable in Ukraine, compared to other countries, because of the small proportion of assistance (about 1 percent) funded through EDCP. The FO also implied that in the future the Embassy may not be able to give a high priority to EDCP, as it may be a burden for staff, while the activities could be implemented in another way via existing funding.

*Objective Four: Strengthening of the Emerging Donor's Capacity to be a Donor*

When initially started, one of the underlying objectives for the EDCP was for the engagement with U.S. government agencies to at least indirectly raise the capacity of the emerging donors to plan and manage assistance. The Estonian and Czech governments have been consistent in providing assistance to media and civil society through continued and sustained partnership with the U.S. government on EDCP since the program launched in 2012. Notably, both the Czech and Estonian governments have been developing their capacity as donors over time. Estonia was first mentioned as a donor country in the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) 1999 report. Estonia spends annually about 0.15% (2014) of its Gross National Income (GNI) on development cooperation, and intends to steadily increase its share, as well as to advance its status and role among other international donors.<sup>7</sup> The Czech Republic has actively participated in the activities of DAC and in May 2013 became a member. The Czech Republic's development cooperation focuses on a limited number of partner countries, priority themes and activities. The Czech Republic has a clear, broadly owned policy vision and strategy for development cooperation, which is considered an integral part of its foreign policy. According to the 2010 Act on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid, Czech development cooperation should "contribute to eradicating poverty in the context of sustainable development, and contribute to economic and social development, environmental protection, and promoting democracy, human rights and good governance in developing countries."<sup>8</sup>

*Objective Five: Assistance delivered by an Emerging Donor which has gone through a similar transition experience*

The Czech Republic and Estonia, in their development cooperation strategies, focus on projects that may benefit from their comparative advantage, including their experience with the process of transition towards a democratic political system.<sup>9</sup> Both countries believe that promotion and support of democratic processes is an essential precondition for security. Their comparative advantage - the experience and knowledge they acquired in the process of their own political and economic transition that can be transferred and implemented in beneficiary countries to foster the development of democratic societies - is the main objective of development cooperation strategy for both countries.<sup>10</sup>

In Ukraine, it was apparent that Estonia and the Czech Republic have had a strong comparative advantage in their cooperation with partner countries in Eastern Europe. It was also noticeable that the trainers and their partners have a deep understanding of the region of the issues and, in the example of the media

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<sup>7</sup> Overview of Estonian Development Cooperation - <http://vm.ee/en/overview-estonian-development-cooperation>

<sup>8</sup> Review of the Development Cooperation Policies and Programmes of the Czech Republic - [https://www.mzv.cz/file/2188535/Czech\\_Republic\\_peer\\_review.pdf](https://www.mzv.cz/file/2188535/Czech_Republic_peer_review.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic - [https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/en/foreign\\_relations/development\\_cooperation\\_and\\_humanitarian/index.html](https://www.mzv.cz/jnp/en/foreign_relations/development_cooperation_and_humanitarian/index.html)

<sup>10</sup> Czech Republic Cooperation Strategy 2015 - 2030 - [https://www.mzv.cz/file/2710363/CZ\\_Development\\_Cooperation\\_Strategy\\_2018\\_2030.pdf](https://www.mzv.cz/file/2710363/CZ_Development_Cooperation_Strategy_2018_2030.pdf)

projects, that they are going through similar experiences by being affected by the disinformation coming from Russia. In the training in Mykolaiv, the Ukrainian and Estonian trainers designed a training curriculum, which provided an opportunity for local media representatives to learn about responsible journalism and how to deliver a message considering the sensitivity of being in an intercultural region during an informational war. As a result of the training, the participants learned how to focus on constructive narratives based on journalism standards, how to present information on sensitive issues, and how to present news objectively in a conflict environment. The project also includes a series of follow-on activities for the best performing trainees, including participation in round tables, press tours in Kyiv, and a trip to interact with journalists in Estonia.

### **Conclusions**

Field observation and interviews with the Eastern European and Ukrainian partners and beneficiaries suggested that Emerging Donor Challenge Program is an effective instrument in offering assistance to media and civil society. This provides complementary funding to other U.S. government assistance and diversifies funding. The emerging donors should be treated as evolving institutions learning from their past experience as aid recipients. The benefits of partnership projects are undeniable, from sharing the transition experience, to providing additional resources and ideas for development. In the example of the Czech and Estonian MFA's involvement in the EDCP, they have shown their commitment to partnership from the time the program launched in 2012. The challenge in moving forward with the program is to find the more effective way to collaborate and to achieve better and more sustainable results. Triangular cooperation focused on demand-driven development, with systematic analysis of how to best accomplish results, would bring not only positive results but also a positive change within the international aid community.

### **Recommendations**

To assure more effective EDCP project implementation, the following is recommended:

- Select one theme for the EDCP round, such as media literacy or new social media tools to combat disinformation. Focusing on one topic per solicitation would allow more results and impact to be achieved.
- Keep the management of all projects under the same thematic field together within a country, to assure there is coherence and coordination of efforts internally.
- Implementing partners should be selected on a competitive basis and should have experience managing multi-donor assistance and a proven record of collaboration with different donors.
- The Cooperative Agreement assistance instrument may be a better way to manage awards, as it provides for more substantial involvement on the part of the U.S. government.
- Robust monitoring and evaluation plan should be required, and requested as a component of project design, during proposal solicitation.
- Implementing partners should be required to provide justification for the activities proposed and their rationale for selecting their target population and their selection criteria for choosing project participants.
- Collaboration with other projects implemented in the country on the same theme is highly encouraged.

## **Attachment #2: Energy Activity Observations in Ukraine by Energy Team Member Simone Lawaetz**

### **I. Descriptions of EDCP Grants Evaluated**

(1) Project Title: Energy Diplomacy Lectures and Roundtables

Grantee: Bulgarian Diplomatic Institute (BDI), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Ukrainian sub-grantee providing logistical support: iC Consulente.

Period of performance: April 12, 2017 – July 31, 2018 (seeking no-cost extension as there are funds remaining after completing SOW activities).

Award amount: \$64,568 U.S.G award; \$34,080 cost share from BDI. Total \$98,648.

Primary activities:

(i) Preparation of a User Manual, which was a compilation of documents such as the Treaty Establishing the Energy Community, the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, and various EU energy communications. Printed copies of the User Manual were distributed during the student lectures, described below.

(ii) Kiev: Student lectures at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kiev focusing on EU energy policy developments, EU-Ukraine relationships as related to energy, regional energy challenges and the legislative framework (similar agenda across all the university lectures, described below); Roundtable discussion entitled, “Energy Diplomacy: What Does it Mean for Ukraine?” attended by national and municipal officials, NGOs, business community; Meeting with American Chamber of Commerce; Meeting with European Business Association.

(iii) Chernivtsi: Student lectures at “Yuriy Fedkovych” Chernivtsi National University; Roundtable discussion entitled, “Energy Diplomacy: What Does it Mean for Ukraine?” attended by municipal authorities, including Mayor of Chernivtsi, NGOs, business community; meeting with CEO of the Chernivtsi district heating company.

(iv) Lviv: Student lectures at the Lviv National Polytechnic University and the “Ivan Franko” National University; Roundtable discussion entitled, “Energy Diplomacy: What Does it Mean for Ukraine?” with municipal authorities, including the City Council, the State Regional Administration, NGOs, students, and municipal energy companies.

(v) Kharkiv: Student lectures at Kharkiv National University and the Kharkiv National Economic University; Roundtable discussion entitled, “Energy Diplomacy: What Does it Mean for Ukraine?” attended by municipal officials, NGOs, and business community.

(2) Project Title: Building Capacities for Energy Sector Reform: Sharing Slovak experience with Ukraine

Grantee: Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (SFPA) (NGO) and Ukrainian sub-grantee, Center for Global Studies, “Strategy XXI.”

Period of performance: Oct 3, 2016 – Oct 2, 2017

Award amount: \$86,420 U.S.G Award; no cost-share but builds off earlier SlovakAid-funded project [Sept 2015 – Dec 2016, 109, 716 euros [98,736 funded by SlovakAid) for 4-day training in Kyiv on Visegrad4 experience on energy efficiency (EE) and renewable energy (RE); 2 study tours to Slovakia for national and municipal officials, respectively; one trade fair to showcase Slovak clean energy (CE) products and technologies; and a book on Visegrad4 experience in CE].

Primary activities: Trade fairs in Chernihiv and Dnipro, and one study tour to Slovakia to share Slovak experience with increasing EE and use of RE at the municipal level, showcase Slovak products and technologies, including innovative financing mechanisms, and enable networking between municipal leaders and Slovak CE enterprises interested in expanding their business in the Ukraine.

(3) Project Title: Ukraine Energy Security Expert Hub

Grantee: United Nations Development Programme Ukraine

Period of performance: Stage 3: January 2018 – December 2018 (Start date delayed, as U.S. government funding was not yet available at the time of the EDCP Evaluation).

Award amount: \$100,000; no cost share but builds off earlier SlovakAid-funded projects (Stage 1: Feb. 2016 – June 2017, \$222,542; Stage 2: Sept. – Dec. 2017, \$87,000).

Primary activities: (1) Create an Energy Security Expert Hub (Task Force) to provide the Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine with strategic advice on increasing energy security (ES); (2) Support development of an Action Plan for ES 2035; (3) Provide support for implementation of ES 2035; (3) Contribute to the design and development of a policy environment to ensure ES under the framework of ES2035, and (4) Support the ES component of Ukraine’s integration with the Energy Community via the establishment of high level dialogues.

## II. Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The evaluation team conducted a review of the project progress reports and deliverables, and held interviews with the grantees and selected beneficiaries, to respond to the following six evaluation questions:

### (1) The enduring relationships that are or are not forged between the donor country and the assisted one

Findings: Each of the donor country grantees partnered with a local Ukrainian organization to provide local support for grant implementation. In the case of the Energy Diplomacy Lectures, the Managing Director of the local partner, IC Consulenter, had significant technical expertise in the energy sector and facilitated the Roundtable discussions. Their role went beyond logistical support to technical collaboration. In the case of the SFPA and the Center for Global Studies, the relationships were pre-existing. Nonetheless, resources received through the sub-contract enabled the local organization to gain experience, strengthen their knowledge and grow their business. The Fairs and Study Tour conducted under Activity #2 enabled relationships to be formed between the Slovak clean energy private sector and Ukrainian municipal authorities, and between Ukrainian municipal authorities grappling with the same challenges. The BDI roundtables brought together a diverse set of stakeholders, as described in #2 below.

Conclusions: The EDCP grants strengthened relationships between the donor country grantees and their Ukrainian implementing partners and beneficiaries. New connections were forged between academics, the

public and private sectors of the participating countries through the grant events: lectures, roundtables, study tour, and fairs.

Recommendations: Future requests for applications should require collaboration with a local Ukrainian partner to help build local capacity and strengthen inter-country relationships. This happened organically in this case, but should be explicitly required going forward.

## **(2) The technical quality of the assistance provided**

### Findings:

Activity #1 - Attendance at the lectures and roundtables far exceeded expectations. According to BDI, 670 students attended six lectures across four cities, whereas only 480 were targeted. The User Manual was well received, and the Roundtables sparked active discussion between a diverse set of stakeholders on a topic – energy diplomacy – that is highly relevant but had not been explicitly addressed to date. Lecture attendees were asked to fill in a questionnaire at the end of the student lectures, evaluating, among other things, the lecture’s usefulness, satisfaction with the materials provided, the lecturers’ presentation skills and selection of the lecture topics. The results were highly positive. For example, 98.63% of the students attending the lecture at the Tara Shevchenko National University of Kyiv who filled out the questionnaire evaluated the event as “extremely useful;” 75.63% were “extremely satisfied” with the materials provided; and the lecturers’ presentation skills were rated 4.73 on a scale of 1(lowest)-5(highest). Students attending the National University of Kyiv lectures were engaged in areas of study related to international relations or economics, with some focusing on energy topics such as oil and gas, global value chains, energy business basics, and renewables.

Activity #2 – According to the USAID grant manager, SFPA, and Mr. Ivanov, the former Chernihiv City Council Member, the Fairs were well organized and well attended. Over 240 people attended the two Fairs (one in Dnipro and one in Chernihiv) who were engaged in energy efficiency and renewable energy in municipal authorities, private companies, and NGOs. Twenty mayors, deputy mayors and city energy managers from seven oblasts participated in a study tour to Slovakia. The Association of Energy Efficient Cities in the Ukraine helped identify the study tour participants. An additional six participants from IFC attended at their own expense. The evaluation team reviewed the study tour report and conducted an interview with a beneficiary, who described the study tour’s very busy schedule of site visits, presentations, and meetings on a wide range of topics -- energy certification of buildings and insulation materials, town-wide energy management policy and plans, cogeneration, district heating modernization, energy efficient street lighting, waste water treatment, power plant modernization, and energy efficiency financing mechanisms.

A website was developed for the project, but a number of sub-pages have buttons that were not developed such as those related to the “Solutions” tab and Visegrad4 Official Documents. The website was intended to share information on the project, “monitoring reports” on energy efficiency in the Ukraine, on Visegrad4 experiences with implementing CE projects, and on CE financing opportunities. Although the website was included in the grant award’s scope of work, it remained under-developed at the time of the EDCP evaluation. The Director of the Center for Global Studies stated that he is seeking additional funding to build out these pages. Mr. Ivanov, the former Chernihiv City Council Member, recalled looking at the website, but had not used it as a resource. The number of website hits was not reported on.

### Conclusions:

Activity #1 - Overall, the technical quality of the lectures and roundtables was high and the topic – energy diplomacy – was highly relevant to Ukraine’s energy sectoral and political circumstances, and to the students’ interest and areas of study. The presentations and User Manual were very practical and well-received. According to BDI, the lectures and roundtables were particularly well-received outside of Kyiv, as these cities receive very few international speakers.

Activity #2 – The Fairs and Study Tour were well organized and attended, and showcased CE solutions that were highly relevant to the Ukrainian context. The topics, products and technologies selected were practical, and the events provided good networking opportunities with Slovak municipal and city energy managers and clean energy enterprises. The utility of the website and the Ukraine energy efficiency “monitoring reports” is unclear.

Given that EDCP awards are made in the form of Fixed Obligation Grants (FOGs), there is little U.S. government control over technical direction and content, beyond individual milestone requirements. As such, it is critical that grantees can demonstrate high technical capacity prior to award, and that they intend to partner with local entities to help ensure the relevancy of materials and to identify appropriate local participants. In the case of the energy EDCP grants, it seems that the application and proposal review process was such that it enabled awards to go to institutions that had the technical knowledge and capacity to prepare deliverables of high technical quality and meet the grants’ objectives.

Recommendations: Continue to ensure that the EDCP application and proposal review process results in awards to technically competent organizations partnered with knowledgeable local institutions. Rather than develop a new project-specific website which may not see much traffic and may not be cost-effective to build, given the narrow scope of the project and its limited duration, project information and reports should be disseminated at project events and through existing websites of the grantee and its partners.

### **(3) The extent to which the management burden of Embassy Staff is worth the effort or could be lessened with better procedures**

Findings: The DCM noted that Ukraine development assistance jumped from \$132M to \$700M but staff capacity to manage these additional funds did not increase concomitantly. A couple of years ago, staff were reluctant to take on managing the EDCP grants but did so at his request. The DCM also emphasized that the grantee, rather than the US government, determined the grant objectives and components. Similarly, the USAID Economic Growth Office Director stated that the EDCP grant was a big administrative lift by USAID for a very small grant size. Nonetheless, the U.S. Embassy official managing the EDCP Energy Diplomacy Lecture grant welcomed the opportunity to manage the grant and did not find her grant management responsibilities to be excessively burdensome.

Conclusions: The EDCP grant sizes are very small, especially relative to Ukraine’s current large development assistance budget, and require a disproportionate amount of a contract officer and grant manager’s time to procure and manage. However, as they are FOGs, their management requires little technical guidance or direction.

Recommendations: To reduce the management burden on the U.S. government of the small EDCP grants, the EDCP goal of building relationships between emerging donor countries and beneficiary countries could be met through a traditional contract, stipulating that as a program objective, and then finding opportunities during contract implementation for relationship-building and cost-sharing with emerging donors through a “grants under contract” mechanism. However, this mechanism would involve much greater cost, currently

totally unaffordable for the amounts ACE allocates to EDCP, given contractor overheads and G&A fees that would have to be paid for making grants under a contract. This alternative way of making grants equivalent to EDCP grants, however, would enable the U.S. government to better sustain and scale their results, as the contractor would have more control over their grants' implementation and M&E, and would be better able to tie their results more effectively to other U.S. government assistance projects, as described in #6 below. Alternatively, if U.S. Embassy management considered it important for junior U.S. Embassy staff to gain experience with project management and knowledge of the energy sector, it might be beneficial and cost-effective for them to manage the EDCP FOGs, as little technical expertise is required for FOG management. Under this scenario for awarding and managing EDCP grants, a U.S. Embassy contract officer's time and a streamlined procurement process would also be required.

**(4) The extent to which participating in this program strengthens the emerging donor's capacity to be a donor**

Findings: Of the three grants, only one – the Bulgarian Energy Diplomacy lectures (activity #1 above) - included direct cost-share from an Emerging Country Donor. The grantee, BDI, which is an arm of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated that they had faced a steep learning curve for understanding U.S. award and reporting requirements, and found it difficult to provide some of the required documentation such as the BDI Founding Act. Nonetheless, the U.S. Embassy had fewer questions for them as the project progressed, and they were now knowledgeable of the grant requirements. BDI appreciated that the grant making process was quicker than that of the EU. They respond to MFA reporting requirements as well and had not adopted any of the U.S. reporting practices in their own processes. BDI considered the “trilateral cooperation” with the U.S. to be critical to the program; if BDI had implemented it alone, there might have been suspicions about Bulgaria's agenda in delivering lectures throughout the Ukraine.

While activities #2 and #3 above do not include direct cost-share, they are follow-on activities to active SlovakAid-funded projects and the deliverables for #2 have been co-branded with the SlovakAid logo. UNDP thought SlovakAid benefited by being linked to a larger U.S. donor, USAID. UNDP and USAID found SlovakAid to be a strong partner.

Conclusions: There was little direct communication between the U.S. Embassy or USAID and SlovakAid and the Bulgaria MFA during project implementation, making any capacity building of the emerging donor unlikely. However, co-branding and cost-sharing with the U.S. provided additional credibility to the emerging donor and the project deliverables. It is unclear whether capacity building of the emerging donor is necessary at this time, given the positive comments made about SlovakAid's responsiveness and contributions to the project. Unless a specific component is added to the EDCP program that would focus on building emerging donor capacity, the EDCP program is not well-designed to accomplish this objective.

Recommendations: Continue cost-sharing of EDCP activities with emerging donors to leverage additional funds and to help bolster the image and credibility of emerging donor partners.

**(5) The extent to which the assistance is better absorbed and/ or targeted because delivered by an emerging donor that has already been through the same process of economic reform and democracy-building**

Findings: BDI and the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kiev professors noted that delivery of the material by Bulgarian experts provided credibility to the presentations, as the countries have similar post-Soviet histories and face similar energy challenges, such as dependency on energy imports, need for increased energy efficiency, and high use of nuclear power. Similarly, SFPA and the former Deputy Mayor of Chernihiv noted that Ukraine and Slovakia share similar post-Soviet energy challenges such as inefficient

buildings and centralized district heating systems, and that Slovakia was a model with respect to EE financing and attracting investment in improving EE in buildings and use of renewables for heating. Slovakian clean energy enterprises showcased the results of their projects in Slovakia, which could be transferred or adapted to the Ukraine. Twelve Slovakian enterprises paid their own way to participate in Fairs in Ukraine and establish business connections with Ukrainian municipal authorities.

Conclusions: The program was made more effective by its delivery by other post-Soviet countries that faced similar challenges in the energy sector. Private Slovakian firms were very interested in expanding their businesses to Ukraine, as they saw market opportunities there for their products and services in EE and RE.

Recommendations: Continue utilizing regional institutions and experts to share their expertise in addressing shared energy challenges. Given the current U.S. emphasis on enhancing American prosperity and job creation, however, relevant U.S. CE enterprises should be invited to also participate in the Fairs at their own cost.

#### **(6) The extent to which results to date have been sustained or scaled up**

Findings: While SFPA and Mr. Ivanov, the former Chernihiv City Council Member, were unable to quantify business transactions or initiation of new CE projects as a result of the grant, they provided anecdotes of projects stemming from the Fairs and the study tour, including the development of a centralized water system in Dnipro, a municipal waste-to-heat project, and the connections made between the Mayor of Hlukhiv and a Slovak enterprise that could adapt its biomass technology to use local resources, flax and hemp stems, for heating and power. Mr. Ivanov had kept in touch with mayors and deputy mayors from seven other Oblasts and had continued conversations with Slovakian EE experts. While the USAID program, Municipal Energy Reform Program (MERP), had conducted energy audits in Chernihiv, no connection was made between the audit findings or other program activities and the EDCP grant activities.

After the Energy Diplomacy lecture and Roundtable, the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kiev had asked BDI about establishing a longer-term student exchange program with Bulgarian Universities, but their outreach received no response. BDI declined to use the remaining funds in its grant to support this, at the suggestion of the EDCP evaluation team and the U.S. Embassy grant manager, citing lack of funds (Ukrainian students or the university would need to pay) and the time required to organize it.

Conclusions: At least two investments seem to have resulted from the grant, although it is not clear what energy-related aspect was included in the centralized water project. No linkages were made between the EDCP grant activities and other donors' or USAID's project activities. As the EDCP grants are FOGs, the U.S. has no authority to give technical direction outside of negotiating the award milestones.

Recommendations: By including EDCP grant activities as components of a larger US contract, opportunities for sustainability and scale-up are enhanced. When opportunities arise to scale-up or sustain activity results – such as in developing a longer-term student exchange program with Bulgaria – the US government can direct the contractor to take advantage of them. Furthermore, the contractor may have the resources to follow through, and will be positioned to tie the sub-grant activity in with other relevant program components.

### **Attachment #3: Local Government Project Observations by Team Member Michael Keshishian**

The responses to the evaluation questions for the EDCP Local Government Projects evaluated in Moldova are as follows:

#### **1. The enduring relationships that are or are not forged between the donor country and the assisted one**

Enduring relationships are being created between the donor countries of Poland and Slovakia and the assisted country of Moldova. The primary motivating factors behind these relationships are EU mandates, which require member states to provide foreign assistance. However, EDCP grants helped Poland and Slovakia establish their aid organizations and make progress towards these EU requirements, and are thus contributing to creating enduring relationships with Moldova.

The EU's Foreign Aid Policy is a product of the Lisbon Treaty of 2009 and sets a target of between 0.7% and 0.33% of Gross Domestic Production (GDP), depending on the size of a member's economy. Both Poland and Slovakia are motivated to satisfy this requirement, although both have fallen short of their targets. Both countries drafted legislation creating budding foreign assistance organizations (PSF and the Slovak Agency for International Development or "SlovakAID") linked to their Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) which are providing assistance to a number of countries, including Moldova. EDCF grants, together with funding from the Polish and Slovak governments and other sources of funding, helped with the establishment of these aid organizations by providing them with opportunities to implement programs in Moldova. Both MFAs are continuing to implement or fund activities in Moldova, even without EDCP funding.

The EU established a working group on Moldovan integration into its Union. Poland is responsible for the local governance portion of this integration and is assisting Moldova with harmonization to the Council of Europe's "European Charter of Local Self-Governance."

Likely evidence of the enduring relationships being created between Poland and Moldova is the fact that Poland is continuing to support projects that were previously jointly funded with EDCP funds. For example, one of the EDCP grants with Poland was for the creation of the "Local Authorities Information Center" (ICLA) in Moldova. The ICLA is a resource center for Moldovan local governments where they can obtain information on legal issues, technical assistance, and other matters related to local governance. Another ongoing EDCP grant from Poland was for the LEADER<sup>11</sup> project, which creates coalitions of civil society, business, and local government, which jointly decided on local development projects intended to promote rural development. EDCP funding for the ICLA ended, but Polish funding, through PSF, which is basically the Poland MFA's implementing agent, continues to fund it.

The Slovak Agency for International Development received EDCP funding which was passed on to INEKO, a Slovak NGO, to establish an online index of municipal transparency. This activity has since ended, and SlovakAID continues to operate in Moldova without EDCP funding. SlovakAID prioritizes good governance, water and sanitation in Moldova. Towards that end, SlovakAID is contributing \$300,000 to USAID's \$22M, newly launched "My Communities" Project, a project intended to promote more effective, accountable and participatory local governance in Moldova. The USAID office in Moldova is very pleased with this outcome. It is reasonable to assume that EDCP funding helped SlovakAID implement projects in Moldova, and that this at least, in part, helped to secure Slovak funding for USAID's follow-on

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<sup>11</sup> "LEADER is an acronym in French meaning "Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale" or "Links between actions for the development of the rural economy".

project. USAID leadership in Moldova, while critical of EDCP for reasons discussed elsewhere, acknowledges that the continued involvement of Polish development assistance and SlovakAID in Moldova is probably in part due to EDCP funding.

In sum, EDCP funding is probably not the primary reason that enduring relationships were created between Poland, Slovakia and Moldova. EDCP funding provided both Poland and Slovakia an opportunity to implement projects in Moldova, however, and both continue to be involved, even now that EDCP funding has ceased. It is probably fair to conclude, therefore, that EDCP funding is helping to create enduring relationships between donor countries and assisted countries.

## **2. The technical quality of the assistance provided**

The technical quality of the assistance provided through the EDCP grants to PSF and SlovakAID and their implementing entities, PSF and INEKO (which provided a sub-grant to the Moldovan NGO “IDIS Viitorul”) was overall satisfactory. However, there are issues of sustainability with both the LEADER project as well as the Municipal Transparency Index. The evaluators also question some of the implementation modes employed by both projects. Considering the relatively small amounts of EDCP funding involved, however, it is fair to say that both projects achieved satisfactory results.

The decision to target work at the subnational level in Moldova was appropriate at this point in the county’s development. For one, the team heard several times during our interviews that work at the national level is currently difficult and not desirable, because the government is considered corrupt and politically captured. At the same time, municipal governments and mayors in particular are among the most trusted institutions in Moldova, along with the military and the Church. Promoting more accountable, transparent and responsive municipal governance can be an appropriate, intermediate strategy, if work at the national level is currently not possible. USAID employed this strategy of working on democratic governance at the subnational level in Milosevic’s Serbia and in Shevardnadze’s Georgia, while waiting for windows of opportunity to engage in governance at the national level. Focusing on the subnational level was and continues to be a viable area of governance intervention in Moldova.

In addition to targeting well, the timing of both EDCP grants was also fortunate. USAID reported that the EDCP activities came at a time when its budget for Moldova was very low, so even the relatively small amount of EDCP funding was welcome. Furthermore, the focus on local government aligned with (and continues to align with) USAID’s Country Development and Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) for Moldova. Good governance work at the local level can create a cadre of trusted, local leaders who can eventually aspire to higher offices, such as running for members of parliament. The literature suggests that having a pipeline of proven local leaders feeding into national politics may be important for a country’s long-term democratic development, as opposed to having national-level elites taking turns at running a country. For these reasons, working at the local level through the LEADER project as well as the Municipal Transparency Index project was a good choice.

The Municipal Transparency Index received mixed reviews by some of the mayors that the team interviewed. Several mayors felt that the Index was not necessary, as there are already similar sites in existence. Some of the mayors reported that they had already on their own created transparency measures, such as posting council decisions in bus stations, live streaming council meetings on the internet, holding public hearings, publishing information on their own websites and Facebook pages, and more. These mayors criticized the methodology employed by IDIS Viitorul in that, they claim, it did not take public opinion into account, but the team feels that this would not have been a very objective measure of municipal transparency. These mayors had faint praise for the Index, and at the same time politely indicated that it was not necessary. Another mayor interviewed reported being pleased with the Index, however, as she said

that they used the Index to see where their weaknesses were, and then sought to improve their score in that particular area (municipal procurement, in this case).

All interviewed in regards to the Municipal Transparency Index indicated that the actual website itself was not receiving much internet traffic. Instead, the bigger value of the site, they stated, came from the multiplier effect when the media used data from the site to publish content. According to IDIS Viitorul, Moldovan media outlets used data from the Municipal Transparency Index site about 500 times to publish stories.

The best value of the Municipal Transparency Index may have been that it created a sense of competition between municipalities. Even the mayors who did not think that the Index was needed stated that they paid attention to it and compared their scores to those of other municipalities. The mayors were aware that information from the Index was being used by media outlets for creating content. The Index was also used, in conjunction with other information, to select municipalities that are going to participate in USAID's new "My Communities" Project.

It must be reported here that PAS in the U.S. Embassy in Moldova, which managed the grant for the Municipal Transparency Index, was more critical of the project than this evaluation team. PAS felt that the impact of the Index was negligible, and that \$300,000 was a lot to pay for a website. The evaluation team believes that creating the website was probably the least amount of work involved in the creation of the Index, and that most of the level of effort probably went into the collection of the data needed for the site. PAS acknowledges that they were "not really involved other than monitoring reports and dispensing money." The team believes that since PAS was by its own admission not heavily involved in managing this grant, it may not be aware of some of the positive impacts of the Index.

One problem with the Municipal Transparency Index is that to remain relevant, it will have to be updated on a regular basis. INEKO created a manual containing instructions on the process for collecting data and updating the website. However, IDIS Viitorul stated that while it had the technical capacity to update the site on its own it would also require additional funding. The Municipal Transparency Index will quickly lose relevance if it is not regularly updated.

One of the strengths of the LEADER project was that it made use of existing Moldovan legislation in the creation of the Local Action Groups (LAGs). LAGs are mentioned and recognized under Moldovan law and can be officially registered as legal entities, establish bank accounts, and enter into legal agreements. PSF made use of this legislation in creating LAGs under the LEADER project. This may seem like a minor point, but there are many similar projects in other countries where donors do not make use of existing legislation, and instead stand up organizations that are in essence parallel institutions of government. Such organizations often then compete with local governments for funding, and sometimes even legitimacy. USAID recognizes the danger of this, and encourages making use of host country systems in its programming, something that PSF successfully did.

Communities cooperating in LAGs may also facilitate another legal arrangement possible under Moldovan law. Moldovan communities are able to enter into territorial partnerships with one another for the purposes of addressing a common need. For example, two or more communities can create an enterprise for solid waste removal, thus, benefiting from economies of scale. Cooperating together in LAGs should make it easier for communities to cooperate in other spheres as well.

The LEADER approach involves local governance to an adequate degree. This is important, as similar community-driven development projects often sideline, or only tangentially involve, local authorities. This can undermine their legitimacy. PSF also made use of host country systems by funneling their grant money through local government systems. This is important, as many donors often prefer to fund international or

local NGOs, or even implement projects on their own. Doing so may be easier and perhaps even less risky, but not making use of host country systems deprives local authorities of the opportunity to practice using their own procurement systems, in conjunction with their constituents. The evaluation team observed in several meetings that local authorities, as well as local businesspersons and civil society, were all involved in the LEADER process.

One remarkable outcome of the LEADER project should be noted. The team learned during our interviews in the village of Colibas that one of the youth who had been part of the LAG, and had since “graduated” from the project went on to draft a law on volunteerism in Romania (as many Moldovans have Romanian citizenship). This is an excellent outcome and shows, as previously stated, that developing democratic practices at the local level can have an impact on the national level (even if it was in another country, in this case).

The evaluation team questioned, however, some of the grants made under the LEADER project. LEADER grants fell under three categories: Public Works, Economic Development and Civil Society. Economic Development grants accounted for about 40% of total grant funding. Some Economic Development grants were made to individual persons or businesses so that they could expand their business. For example, one beekeeper in the Vinogardovca LAG (in Gagauzia) received a grant of several thousand Euro so that he could buy modern bee hives and related equipment. He was not the only beekeeper in the area, however, and it is hard to imagine a system in which one could justify making a grant only to him and not to the other beekeepers. When the mayor in that area was asked about these Economic Development grants, and whether they created any sense of unfairness, she responded that the amounts of money involved were too little for people to become upset over. It is difficult to believe that in a country as poor as Moldova that people do not consider several thousand Euros as a significant amount of money, especially in the even poorer rural areas where the grant was made. The evaluation team proposed that they in the future consider providing LEADER Economic Development grants as loans instead of grants, as that would be fairer. The response from the project implementers, however, was that they are not legally able to make loans. Nevertheless, the team believes that in the future, projects such as this one should consider making loans to individuals or businesses instead of giving grants.

The team also questioned the use of some of the LEADER grants in the category of Public Works. The team was shown a park in Colibas (a community in Gagauzia) that was in part renovated using a LEADER Public Works grant, as well as funding from the World Bank’s Social Investment Fund project totaling about \$117,000. The park was the “pride of the community,” according to the mayor, however, nobody was in the park at the time the team toured it, and it was not well-maintained. In another case in Colibas, a Public Works grant was made for the creation of a community gym which belongs to the local government. This gym, not yet in operation at the time of the evaluation, will eventually charge the public for its use. Operating a gym is not a proper function for a government at any level. While not nearly at the scale of Moldova’s state-owned enterprises (SOEs), which are plagued with debt, mismanagement and corruption, funding local government enterprises such as a gym sends the wrong signal on what the role of government ought to be. It also may deter potential entrepreneurs who might otherwise be interested in opening a gym themselves, if they did not have to compete with a government-subsidized gym. Funding government-owned businesses may be contrary to one of the primary objectives of the LEADER program, namely fostering rural development.

The category of Cultural grants under the LEADER project also contained some questionable grants. An informant at the Polish Embassy in Moldova stated that many of the requests for grants under the Culture category were for community festivals. One can perhaps argue that festivals are a good way to create community pride, but festivals are one-off events that are not sustainable, and it is difficult to see how they

contribute to the LEADER project's stated objective of developing rural economies and revitalizing communities.

The LEADER project also contained a number of international study tours for LAG members. Many of these study tours were to Poland, and other former Warsaw pact countries such as Romania and Lithuania, however, there was also at least one study tour to Italy. One of the ideas behind EDCP and its support for emerging donor countries such as Poland and Slovakia to provide assistance in Moldova was that they might be effective at it, since they share a similar history of being under communist rule and then transitioning into European democracies. The study tour to Italy does not fit this model. The mayor who benefited from that study tour explained that Italy was selected because they are considered advanced in the provision of social services for handicapped persons.

A more fundamental problem that the team saw with the LEADER approach was that many of the grants made in any of the three categories (Business, Public Works, and Culture) did not appear to support local development strategies (which feed into regional development strategies and ultimately into a national development strategy). PSF claims that the grants they make do support local development strategies, and even state so during their LAG trainings, which the team observed in the village of Braviceni. It is difficult to see, however, how hundreds of small grants such as, for example, costumes for a theater, festivals (for which there are many requests), dance lessons for 20 disabled youths, or the renovation of a summer camp cafeteria, contribute to local development strategies in any coherent, coordinated way. The team believes that the LEADER project could have had a better methodology in place for assuring that grants were in support of local development strategies.

Instead of making grants in support of local development strategies, it appears that grants were made on the basis of assuring that all communities that were part of a LAG benefited in more or less equal part. For example, the LAG in Colibas that the team interviewed consisted of members from nine communities. After the lengthy LEADER process, nine projects were identified, one for each of the nine communities. The LAG in the village of Vinogradovca also consisted of a similar number of communities, and all but one received a LEADER grant.

The lack of linkages between local budgets and local strategies is recognized by the donor community. For this reason, one of the objectives of USAID's new "My Communities" Project is going to focus on linking municipal expenditures to municipal strategies, creating mid-term planning frameworks, as well as tools for measuring to what extent budget execution is linked to municipal development strategies. A more stringent test for assuring that LEADER grants were in support of local development strategies under EDCP would have helped with introducing the concept of linking expenditures to policy and strategy.

The greatest weakness of the LEADER project is probably its lack of sustainability. The LEADER approach relies on paid community facilitators. It is these facilitators that mobilize community members into the LAGs, a process that requires organizing frequent meetings between government, business, and civil society over a period of many months. It is reasonable to assume that once the LEADER project ends and the facilitators are no longer employed the LAGs are not going to mobilize on their own. Furthermore, once the project ends, and there is no more funding to put towards various kinds of grants, it is likely that LAGs will not have sufficient incentives to meet on their own. The mayor of Vinogradovca told the team that the work of the LAGs would not be possible without external funding. This is consistent with an emerging body of literature, which concludes that so-called Community-Driven Development (CDD), while perhaps an effective way to create infrastructure and deliver other public goods, does not create better governance or social cohesion, once the activity ends.

The LEADER project may have had a better chance of achieving sustainable results if it worked more closely through local governments and relied on them for mobilizing the LAGs rather than on paid project staff. Less dependence on LEADER resources for issuing grants, and making more use of local government funding, other Moldovan government funding (such as from the county- or the national-level) and private community funding could have also assured that the LAGs might be more likely to continue their work once the LEADER project ends.

**3. The extent to which the management burden on Embassy staff is worth the effort or could be lessened with better procedures**

PAS at the U.S. Embassy in Moldova reported that the burden of managing the Municipal Transparency Index grant was similar to that of the other approximately 120 grants that it manages. PAS stated that “it took up staff time and was not worth the effort.” The evaluators conclude from this that even though PAS did not feel that the project had much impact, it at least was not burdensome in terms of management, in comparison to other grants.

USAID, on the other hand, had very strong feelings regarding the management burden of the LEADER grant. Leadership at USAID pointed out that the burden of managing small EDCP grants was similar to that of managing much larger grants; USAID referred to EDCP grants as being “process heavy but impact light.” USAID stated that they had to put an inordinate amount of management effort into EDCP grants. It started with the registration of PSF in Moldova. PSF reportedly had trouble registering as an NGO, because it had no prior experience in doing this, so it reached out to USAID for assistance. USAID leadership at the time assisted with the registration process but felt that PSF could have put more effort into it for themselves. The management burden continued with addressing what USAID considered to be PSF’s weak financial management systems. USAID conducted an audit which produced nine findings. Eight of the findings were resolved. The ninth audit finding, which was the lack of a financial policy manual and proper accounting software (required by USAID for its beneficiaries), remained an outstanding issue at the time of this evaluation. USAID staff even traveled to Warsaw, Poland, to work with PSF in their home office on these matters. At one point, USAID’s Contracting even wanted to cancel one of the EDDF projects. What further exacerbates the management burden for USAID/Moldova is that their contracting staff is based in Kiev, Ukraine, and PSF/Moldova is managed from Warsaw, and not from the Polish Embassy in Chisinau. PSF reported to the team that they intended to resolve this remaining audit finding and planned to have a financial policy manual and accounting software in place by December 2018, but it will be up to USAID to manage oversight of this follow-through.

USAID leadership stated several times that it does not want to manage anymore EDCP grants in Moldova. According to USAID EDCP grants were appreciated when they were initially made, but the Mission now has sufficient funding, and does not want the burden of managing comparatively small grants. USAID also feels that the projects now being proposed under EDCP grants lack innovation, and that it was time to move on to take development of local government “to the next level.”

In defense of PSF the team feels that the assistance that USAID provided in helping them register and put financial systems into place can also be viewed as part of the overall EDCP mission of helping to develop emerging donors. Furthermore, the evaluators were told that registering as an NGO in Moldova is difficult for every organization, and that requesting assistance in such matters from entities with some sway with the Government of Moldova, such as USAID, is common. The team further addresses this matter below under the evaluation question regarding whether or not EDCP helped strengthen emerging donors’ capacity.

USAID insisted upon PSF registering to do business in Moldova as a pre-condition of their first EDCP grant, and assisted them to do that. Registering as an official NGO in Moldova, and having an office in

Chisinau, created more opportunities for PSF. PSF in Moldova now receives funding from other donors, such as Lithuania, UNDP and the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID). PSF apparently also considers the fact that they have an office in Chisinau as important, because they specifically point it out on their website<sup>12</sup>, and it was the only office they had outside of Poland at the time of the evaluation.

USAID management of the EDCP grant also resulted in PSF putting stronger financial management systems into place. PSF certainly had financial reporting systems before, but as the Polish Embassy told the team, its reporting requirements are “very light,” compared to those of USAID. USAID also insisted that PSF hire an accountant and an expert to help them put financial accounting systems into place.

Implementing programs under EDCP grants also improved PSF’s ability to provide “grants under grants” (\*GUCs). Prior to EDCP funding, PSF was mainly doing direct project implementation, or was providing grants to Polish NGOs (Polish legislation did not allow for making grants to non-Polish NGOs). Now, PSF makes grants to non-Polish NGOs. The staff of PSF also increased from three to about 30, and from a budget of only 200,000 Euro in 2014 to about 1M Euro, at the time of the evaluation.

PSF’s LAG process in Moldova is based on the EU’s LEADER approach. PSF’s ability to implement the EU’s LEADER approach has improved, such that they should be able to implement similar activities in other countries more easily.

Whether SlovakAID (which has a staff of about 12 in Bratislava) also developed their institutional capacity as a result of EDCP grants is less clear. Even when SlovakAID’s implementing agency INEKO was implementing the Municipal Transparency Index project in conjunction with IDIS Viitorul, much of the level of effort was apparently expended in Bratislava, Slovakia. The team assumes this to be the case, as, out of a total EDCP grant of \$157,000, \$106,000, or 67%, was expended in Bratislava. On a related matter, PAS reported that INEKO was a weak NGO, and that their interaction with IDIS Viitorul, a 25-year old NGO which receives funding from many different donors, may have actually benefited INEKO more than vice versa. INEKO certainly felt that the capacity of IDIS Viitorul has improved, as it recommended that IDIS Viitorul should now be able to directly apply for SlovakAID funding, but the team cannot ascertain whether the capacity of SlovakAID has improved as a result of this EDCP grant.

#### **4. The extent to which the assistance is better absorbed and/or targeted because delivered by an emerging donor that has already been through the same process of reform and democracy-building**

The team does not believe that Poland and Slovakia having a similar history of reform and democracy building helped Moldova absorb assistance better. Poland was perhaps selected by the EU to assist Moldova with local governance because of their successful history of local government reform. The PSF project director stated during our interview with him that simply showing Polish models of local governance did not work. PSF does not appear to be using their past as a model for Moldova. PSF study tours, as previously stated, were also not only focused on Poland. PSF is using the LEADER model for their activity with the LAGs. The LEADER model was developed by the EU in 1991. The team doubts that either Poland or Slovakia had anything to do with the development of the LEADER model, since they did not join the EU until 2004 and 2009 respectively.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://solidarityfund.pl/en/kim-jestesmy/o-nas/>

The project implemented by INEKO and IDIS Viitorul was largely an information technology project and it likely had little to do with any commonalities in Slovak and Moldovan history. As PAS stated in an email in response to this question, “Donor money is donor money to Moldovan NGOs – it doesn’t matter where it comes from.”

**Attachment #4: Agriculture Project Observations in Georgia by Team Member Jay Mitchell, September 21-29, 2018**

**Overall Observations**

Two ECDP projects related to agriculture and sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) issues were reviewed. The first project entitled "Partnership with Bulgaria on Risk Assessment and Risk Management during Food Animal Slaughter Processing" worked with the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency (BFSA) to promote economic growth and trade and build Georgia's trade capacity through alignment with its Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) agreement with the European Union and to improve its capacity to assess and address risk in animal products. This project is hereafter referred to as "the Bulgarian project" below. [Note: the reviewers did not meet while in Georgia with BFSA, as they did not have any in-country representatives. They did meet with a Bulgarian Embassy official.] The second project entitled "Introducing EU phytosanitary standards to Georgia" worked with two organizations in the Czech Republic, PIN and a governmental organization the Central Institute for Supervising and Testing in Agriculture (CISTA) to upgrade the phytosanitary sector in Georgia in accordance with EU requirements to enable access of safe Georgian plants and plant products to the EU market. This project is hereafter referred to as "the Czech project" below. [Note: the reviewers only met with PIN while in Georgia, as CISTA did not have any in-country representatives. They did meet with a Czech Embassy official.] The primary partner for both projects in Georgia was the National Food Agency (NFA), which is part of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA) of Georgia.

**Findings**

Both the Bulgarian and Czech projects experienced challenges due to U.S. funding becoming available after the emerging donor funding was available. For the Bulgarian project, this meant that the original scope of the project was performed almost entirely by the Bulgarians, while the U.S. side funded a second phase of activities that commenced in 2018, after the first one was completed in November 2017. For the Czech project, this meant that the overall project was delayed in its start-up.

Both the Bulgarian and Czech projects involved topics too technical and complex for the emerging donors to fully and effectively convey from the U.S. standpoint. For the Bulgarian project, the risk analysis portion was reduced due to changes in Bulgarian Government organization during the project. This is significant, as risk analysis comprised four of the five activities programmed for Phase 1, and thus comprised the bulk of that program. For the Czech project, the two parallel parts involving work with the Georgian National Food Agency on legislative changes due to the EU approximation process, and outreach to educate stakeholders about those changes, were not properly synchronized, since the outreach to stakeholders was done before it was known what legislative changes were forthcoming.

Both the Bulgarian and Czech projects included activities that supported positions counter to U.S. government positions and interests in the SPS sphere. The Bulgarian project appeared to promote the idea that animal welfare is part of the World Trade Organization (WTO) SPS Agreement, a position that is promoted by the European Union, but strongly opposed by the United States. This was revealed during discussions with the NFA risk analysis staff, who told the reviewers that a key outcome related to the Bulgarian project was agreement to carry out work on risk analysis on animal welfare. From the U.S. government standpoint, it is not acceptable to have a project focusing on SPS issues include animal welfare. The Czech project included activities that promoted greater understanding and acceptance of EU policies

and standards on pesticides and maximum residues limits (MRLs), which are contrary to U.S. interests, because the EU has taken a non-risk-based approach that is inconsistent with international standards, and harms U.S. export interests by promoting pesticide policies that prevent the use of substances that have been found by science to be safe. U.S. concerns about EU pesticide policies and their trend of tightening MRLs for many products to limits far more stringent than international and U.S. standards are prominent issues not only in bilateral U.S.-EU trade relations, but also in multi-lateral fora such as the WTO SPS Committee in Geneva and the Codex Alimentarius Commission in Rome, which is the international standard setting body for food safety as recognized by the WTO SPS Agreement.

Both the Bulgarian and Czech projects involved partners that were perhaps not the best choices for those projects. In the case of the Bulgarian project, the BFSA's ability to deliver the main elements of the project, especially the crucial risk analysis and risk management component, was clearly lacking, as the BFSA not only failed to build clear capacity in Georgia in this area, but their own internal Bulgarian government reorganization during the project meant that risk assessment was given much less emphasis than it should have been given. Noteworthy is the fact that the Bulgarian government reorganization involved splitting its risk assessment and risk management into two separate agencies, something required in the EU system, while the Georgian NFA informed the evaluators that Georgia already has both of those functions separated. Several Georgian participants in the Bulgarian training noted that it focused on theory and lacked the hands-on practical training they felt they needed, while some of them also noted they have gotten or hope to receive such practical experience from training sessions being organized by the Latvians in Riga. The choice of Bulgaria as a partner must be questioned, as in the sphere of animal health, Bulgaria is still viewed as having many shortcomings that keep them from fully meeting EU standards, despite having joined the EU in 2007. Latvia, on the other hand, might have been a better choice as a partner in animal health for Georgia, since as a small country with limited resources, they face the same challenges that Georgia does, in terms of trying to meet (or approximate) very complex and costly EU standards. Latvia has also done a better job of meeting EU standards in the area of animal health than Bulgaria. In the case of the Czech project, PIN's expertise was too narrow as evidenced by the fact that when they decided to cut back the field training activities (which are their strength), they were unable to replace the cost savings with meaningful activities related to the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug (BMSB), or other ones that would have helped build Georgian government capacity in plant health.

Several of the findings above lead the evaluators to conclude that both the Bulgarian and Czech projects were not properly vetted with the right technical experts who could have identified concerns with both projects' designs and either revised them to minimize those concerns or suggested those projects were not appropriate for EDCP funding at all. In addition, both projects were written with a clear lack of understanding of basic SPS principles, as well as an idea of what types of SPS-related activities were appropriate and achievable for both projects given their small size of funding and limited duration. Both the Bulgarian and Czech projects, as written, contained goals that could not be achieved within the budgets and time frames of those projects. For the Bulgarian project, the portion on risk assessment and risk management, in particular, was written in a manner that suggested that considerable capacity would be created in the Georgian NFA to carry out risk assessment in the area of animal health, while the evaluators did not find evidence of any capacity of significance being created, and the activity appears to have been limited to the Bulgarians giving the Georgians some presentations that focused on risk management rather than risk assessment. From the U.S. government perspective, the Bulgarian project failed to achieve a key outcome with Georgia on risk assessment, which would have been creating greater understanding of how to carry out actual risk assessments through practical experience. U.S. government experience has shown that risk analysis is a highly complex and technical topic risk analysis differs considerably between types of situations being evaluated, and therefore hands-on experience is essential to any real learning in this area. For the Czech project it is harder to judge this aspect, because of lack of access to the CISTA portion of the project which was aimed at building capacity in the Georgian NFA to improve the country's ability to protect its plant sector from harmful pests and diseases, as well as better access EU markets with its export

of plants and plant products. The evaluators did, however, uncover a major missed opportunity that the Czech project could have addressed as follows. When faced with a plant health emergency during the project related to detection of a serious plant pest, the brown marmorated stink bug (MBSB) that necessitated reducing the project's field training activities substantially (and resulted in reduced project costs related to those training activities), the project failed to deploy those saved resources in helping the Georgians to combat BMSB. [Note: U.S. government support to the Georgian government to combat the BMSB has been substantial, but the Czech project was well-timed to also provide some assistance related to its core aim of helping the Georgian NFA better prepare for plant health emergencies such as the BMSB.]

## **Conclusions**

Both projects were too technical and complex for the emerging donors to effectively implement. The right technical experts were not available to cover the topics of both projects in the detail and technical rigor that U.S. specialists would provide.

## **Recommendations**

The EDCP program is not the best vehicle for delivering complex projects involving topics with technical content of a specialized nature such as agriculture and SPS. The two projects reviewed here should have either been stand-alone projects implemented by the U.S. alone (e.g., by USDA or USAID), or they should not have been carried out at all.

### **1. Were enduring relationships developed?**

#### **Findings**

The results in terms of enduring relationships were mixed. While for both projects, the Georgians reported that they developed useful contacts with some of the Bulgarian and Czech experts they had were introduced to, there was little evidence that such contacts were being actively continued, or were likely to be exploited in the near future. It was also evident that both projects had failed to provide the Georgians with the broader EU contacts (e.g., with the European Commission or other EU Member States) that could have helped Georgia on their path towards greater EU integration. No new relationships were evident for the United States, beyond perhaps closer contacts with the Czech NGO PIN, as the U.S. already has excellent contacts within the Georgian agriculture sector due to the U.S.'s considerable history of assistance and cooperation there.

#### **Conclusions**

Significant enduring relationships do not appear to have been developed beyond the Georgians gaining additional contacts they may or may not use in the future. For both projects, it appeared that neither emerging donor sought to involve either the European Commission nor other EU Member States in the project, as experts who could share their experience, and provide a broader perspective to help Georgia better understand EU requirements, and how best to meet them.

#### **Recommendations**

Future EDCP projects involving emerging donors who are EU Member States should consider involving experts from the European Commission, in order to help the country receiving assistance develop more enduring relationships within the EU. That could also encourage more enduring relationships between the emerging donor and the country receiving the assistance, as the project could have broader contacts that extend to the European Commission, and possibly to other EU Member States, as well.

## **2. Was the quality of assistance the same as U.S. would have done alone?**

### Findings

Both projects did not deliver a quality of assistance that would be the same as what the U.S. would have done alone. For the Bulgarian project the U.S. would have taken a far more rigorous approach to the risk analysis component, which comprised the bulk of the activities. While the Bulgarians only provided some general theoretical knowledge about risk assessment, the evaluators were told by the Georgians that they did not provide the hands-on experience that the U.S. routinely does when training other countries in risk assessment. The Georgians also told the evaluators that they received almost no training in animal health, either theoretical or practical, while the U.S. typically provides significant training in both the theoretical and practical aspects of animal health, including international standards of the World Animal Health Organization (OIE); practical approaches to carrying out surveillance, control and eradication measures for individual animal diseases of concern; and emergency response preparation. The fact that the OIE standards, in particular, appeared to be missing from the Bulgarians' very limited discussions on animal health is quite concerning from the U.S. perspective, since the OIE is the international standard-setting body for animal health, as recognized by the WTO SPS Agreement, and their discussion of their standards should be a key part of any topic related to animal health and international trade.

For the Czech project, the U.S. would have carried out longer and more substantive training for the stakeholders and would have ensured the manual and brochures produced by the project were more substantive in terms of content. The U.S. would have pushed back harder, when the Georgian government told the Czech NGO PIN that the plant health emergency caused by the BMSB necessitated a major reduction in length of training from three days to only one day for key field personnel. The U.S. would also have sought to use the challenges created for Georgia in combatting such a major plant pest as the BMSB as a real-time learning experience, to help the Georgians improve their system for detecting, controlling and eradicating plant diseases and pests.

The above findings suggest that the Bulgarian and Czech implementers failed to build the same amount of capacity in the Georgian animal and plant health sectors as U.S. implementing agencies like USDA or USAID routinely achieve. The one area where the Bulgarians and Czechs were able to provide a better quality of assistance than the U.S. would have done, related to raising awareness to help Georgia meet EU SPS requirements, is not appropriate for U.S. assistance to Georgia, because many of those SPS requirements create trade unfair trade barriers to U.S. exporters as they not consistent with international standards or the WTO SPS Agreement, and they represent different approaches than those that are taken in the United States, and are therefore opposed by the United States in bilateral and international fora, including the WTO and the three international standard-setting bodies for animal health, food safety and plant health (OIE, IPPC, and Codex Alimentarius).

### Conclusions

Both projects suffered from lower quality of assistance due to lack of full U.S. involvement in and oversight of them. In both cases, the projects would have been more effective as standalone U.S. projects in Georgia, and they should have had larger budgets to effectively cover the included topics.

## Recommendations

The EDCP mechanism is not appropriate for complex or too technical projects in general, and it is not appropriate for most projects related to agriculture or SPS, where specific technical and sector knowledge is essential to making them successful.

### **3. Management burden on the U.S. government**

#### Findings

The management for small projects such as those under EDCP is typically similar to that for bigger projects. For both the Bulgarian and Czech projects, the management burden seemed excessive for the size of the project, and appeared to compete for time with other projects overseen by the U.S. Embassy staff in Tbilisi. For the Bulgarian project, the USDA staff overseeing the project for the United States appeared to actively engage in the beginning of the project, when the Bulgarians were one of several emerging donors being considered, and they did travel at least once to Sofia to accompany a training of Georgian experts by the Bulgarians. However, it did not appear that the USDA staff were able to keep up with the program as it changed due to funding challenges, in part because their time was focused on the very large delay in U.S. funding that meant that the Bulgarians completely finished their activities before the U.S. side had the funding needed to engage with the Bulgarians. As a result, U.S. experts were unable to participate in many of the trainings of Georgian experts in Bulgaria as originally planned, which may have contributed to the fact that those trainings were not of the same quality as the U.S. would have provided, and failed to cover the topics in sufficient detail or rigor to meet U.S. standards.

For the Czech project, the USAID staff were also preoccupied with delays in funding, and as a result, appear to have had less time to focus on actual implementation of the project. This was especially significant for the Czech project, given its increased complexity with having two separate components, each with a different Czech implementer, that essentially doubled the management burden for this project. One result of the increased management burden appears to have been lack of USAID pushback on the Czech NGO PIN, when they informed USAID that significant cutbacks would be needed in the training planned for field personnel (due to the BMSB outbreak and lack of available Georgian trainees for the three days of training originally planned). The significant reduction in resources devoted to those trainings, amounting to an estimated \$30,000, did not appear to be re-programmed into other activities such as those to help Georgia combat the BMSB plant pest.

#### Conclusions

Both projects experienced financing problems that increased the management burden and appear to have negatively impacted the outcomes of each of them.

#### Recommendations

Steps should be taken to avoid undue delays in funding from the U.S. side that threaten to delay the overall project's completion, as well as reduce the quality of the assistance, such as working with the emerging donor to try to better match their funding cycle with that of the U.S. funding cycle, and consider delays in the start date of a project by as much as an entire year when significant delays in U.S. funding occur.

#### **4. Unintended benefits such as building the capacity of the emerging donors**

##### Findings

Both the Bulgarians and Czechs reported considerable benefits. The Bulgarians noted the prestige as an emerging donor that they received from working with the U.S., new international contacts, learning about the U.S. food safety system which was helpful to them in improving the system in Bulgaria, and the fact that the EDCP project was large enough in scale to increase their importance as a leading donor in Georgia. The Czechs noted that in addition to prestige and greater visibility for them in Georgia by working with the U.S., they learned a lot from the U.S. about best practices, by adopting the U.S. practice of signing a donor-to-donor Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for projects undertaken with other countries (e.g., Germany), the U.S. steering committee format was adopted for another Czech project in Georgia, and even greater visibility for the Czech Development Agency within their own Czech Government, through contacts with top Czech officials at U.S. meetings and receptions in Tbilisi. The Czechs reported further that cooperation with the U.S. in Georgia helped them secure work on projects with other EU Member States like Austria and Germany, with the Czechs also noting that it was easier in many ways to cooperate with the U.S. on development projects in Georgia than to cooperate with the European Commission, or other EU Member States.

##### Conclusions

For both projects, the unintended benefits of building capacity of the emerging donors were some of the greatest benefits overall, and this points to a key advantage of the EDCP mechanism of partnering with emerging donors, rather than having the U.S. deliver the assistance alone.

##### Recommendations

This criterion of unintended benefits should be considered equally important to the other criteria for the purposes of EDCP project design and evaluation.

#### **5. Relevance of transition experience of emerging donor**

##### Findings

In both agricultural projects, the emerging donors were heavily involved and were the primary providers of assistance. In the Czech project, PIN carried out the training and outreach activities, while the Czech government organization CISTA carried out the technical training. In the Bulgarian project, the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency conducted almost all activities related to the project.

##### Conclusions

Both projects had active involvement of the emerging donor, and exposure to its transition experience, due in part to U.S. funding delays.

##### Recommendations

There is nothing new to recommend, as the emerging donors were already actively involved and applying their transition experience.

**Attachment #6: Riga Graduate School of Law (RGSL) Fellowships for Central Asians Activity Observations in Latvia by Dr. Deborah Prindle, EUR/ACE**

The quality of results obtained from the Riga Graduate School of Law (RGSL) scholarships for Central Asians revealed a number of serious weaknesses, mainly caused by the weaknesses in the process for recruiting and vetting applicants for the scholarships. Also, there are some curriculum weaknesses that would be important to address, notably that the teaching is mostly lecture-based rather than using simulations, applied exercises and other proven adult learning best practice techniques. The final exam is multiple choice rather than giving students a scenario to role play in to demonstrate that they know how to apply the knowledge they have gained. Also, one of the six weeks is spent on travel to Brussels and Luxembourg to meet EU officials, but the students reported learning little from those meetings, as they do not get to observe any EU processes but just hear one person after another lecture about their work. On the positive side, the RGSL faculty (both resident and adjunct) are excellent and well qualified, the administration is efficient and dedicated, and the six-week duration of the training is well conceived; a longer duration would discourage senior applicants, and the one-week anti-corruption training was too short and only attracted “development tourists” rather than serious trainees.

Part of the value of the six-week training format is that RGSL houses the participants together in the same hotel, selecting a place where they have access to facilities where they can choose to cook together and share meals to save on their per diem. This communal housing experience helps to build relationships among the participants, across countries, including at least two participants per class that are wholly selected by and supported financially by RGSL, from countries outside of Central Asia. In the case that I observed, those participants came from West Bank/Gaza and Kosovo. The Kosovo participant served as a role model in many ways for the Central Asia participants and some of them planned to retain a relationship with him. On the other hand, the Central Asians reported that they did not feel that the West Bank/Gaza participant’s concerns and experience were relevant to their own situation and interests, so they reported that they did not plan to sustain a relationship with her.

The most serious problem is that the application process is being gamed by applicants who are often “grant eaters” according to the faculty’s own statements. This means that applicants are fudging their resumes and applications to hide the large amount of donor-sponsored travel that they have already benefitted from, in order to appear to be the kind of untraveled mid-level candidate that the scholarships are targeting – people who have not been exposed to the EU, but who rank high enough that they could move their country in that Western direction if they are exposed to the political and economic benefits of that relationship over the course of their careers. The English language interview in the vetting process is administered by RGSL by phone, and the faculty suspect that applicants are paying others to take that interview as some candidates arrive without the adequate English language competence to benefit from the training, despite having passed their phone interview. This training could have impact if ACE promotes a more interactive/simulation-based curriculum and works with U.S. Embassies in Central Asia to redesign and implement the scholarship candidate identification, vetting, and English language preparation process. The six-week training is almost wholly lecture-based aside from a moot court for human rights simulation. The week spent with the EU is another series of lectures with Q&As. They do not observe any EU processes. ACE should not fund any more one-week anti-corruption

training at RGSL; it is being used as development tourism travel and rewards for the nominated participants.

### **Recommendations**

If U.S. Embassies in Central Asia are willing to devote their time to identification of candidates that really need the training that the RGSL in Latvia is offering, and will ensure that their candidates can meet the English language standards in time for that training, ACE should encourage those Embassies to start to select candidates for scholarship travel a year ahead of time, to allow time for their English language skills to be improved, if needed.

If EDCP funding for Central Asian scholarships will be continued, ACE should work with RGSL to improve their use of role playing and other interactive adult learning techniques in their training, and to improve the use of the students' time in Brussels and Luxembourg to allow them to observe some EU processes, or delete that trip from the scholarship. ACE should also encourage joint management of the relationship with the Latvia MFA on this project between PAS as GOR, and POL/ECON as MFA relationship manager.

ACE should discontinue funding at RGSL for the one-week anti-corruption training that was supported by EDCP for Central Asian trainees, as this opportunity has been misused as a reward for Central Asians rather than a training that they are committed to using back in their home countries.

## **Attachment #7: EDCP Program Management's Definition of Transition Experience by Christine Tefft. EUR/ACE/CRP**

EDCP project documents reflect a broader understanding of how transition experience is relevant to EDCP than that which was applied by the evaluation team. The evaluation team was looking to see if the design of a project involved *a transfer or application of a Central Europe (CE) development model applied during the relevant CE country's transition (or lessons derived therefrom)*. That is only one example of how transition experience facilitated EDCP project objectives over the 2012-2018 period. An example of this, in a project and country that the evaluation did not cover, is the Slovak partners' work in North Macedonia, which applied a model of civil society engagement in EU accession negotiations that proved successful during Slovakia's negotiations with the EU. This collaboration with Slovakia in applying this model and project is being continued through regular USAID programming in North Macedonia.

Those conceiving of and reviewing EDCP proposals, however, conceived of and applied to their design or review a broader view of the value of CE transition experience. For example, in the Round 1 cable announcing the program, ACE said the following about the benefits of Central Europe's transition experience: "The countries of the CE-10 (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria) have significant experience to offer their neighbors to the east and south who are still struggling to transition successfully to stable, market-based, democratic societies. *Shared history and cultural similarities allow citizens of these countries to connect with partners in ways that Americans and West Europeans simply cannot. They also serve as proof that transition can be successful.* If the U.S. can leverage this experience and relevance by partnering with them on projects, it will make our collective efforts more powerful." So in addition to looking for the application of CE models in democratic/market transition, ACE and review panels were also looking for ways in which training and technical assistance could be better absorbed if received from messengers who are culturally similar and came from a shared-socialist history.

In addition, ACE and the proposal review panels looked for and approved many projects the content of which reflected *broader EU standards or European best practices* rather than specific models applied during CE transitions. In Round 4, the objectives even made explicit reference to technical assistance related to EU standards, including a solicitation for proposals to "*improve the legislative and regulatory environment to comply with EU and Energy Community requirements*" and "*support the implementation of relevant EU requirements by beneficiary countries to increase exports to, and enhance private business competitiveness in, the EU market.*" The content of a project in these cases did not need to include conveying a CE model, but it did need to involve CE expertise in meeting EU standards (which expertise the partner would have developed through CE transition). This was viewed as another means of conveying the benefit of the CE transition to partners aspiring to EU accession.

EUR/CRP believes that, had the evaluation team applied ACE's, Posts' and review panels' broader view of the value of CE involvement in EDCP project implementation, the team may have come to a different conclusion about the degree to which evaluated projects benefitted from CE transition experience.